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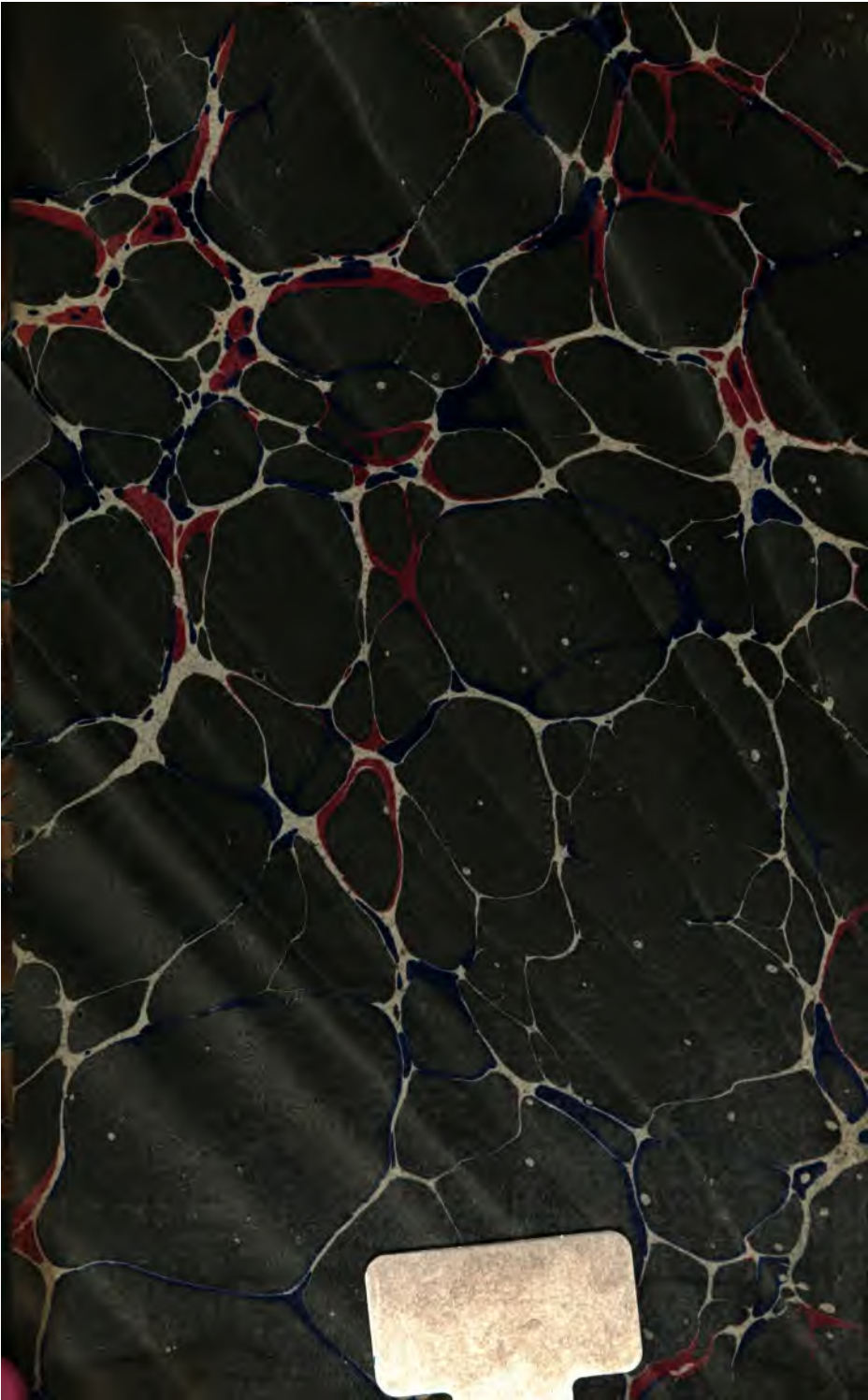
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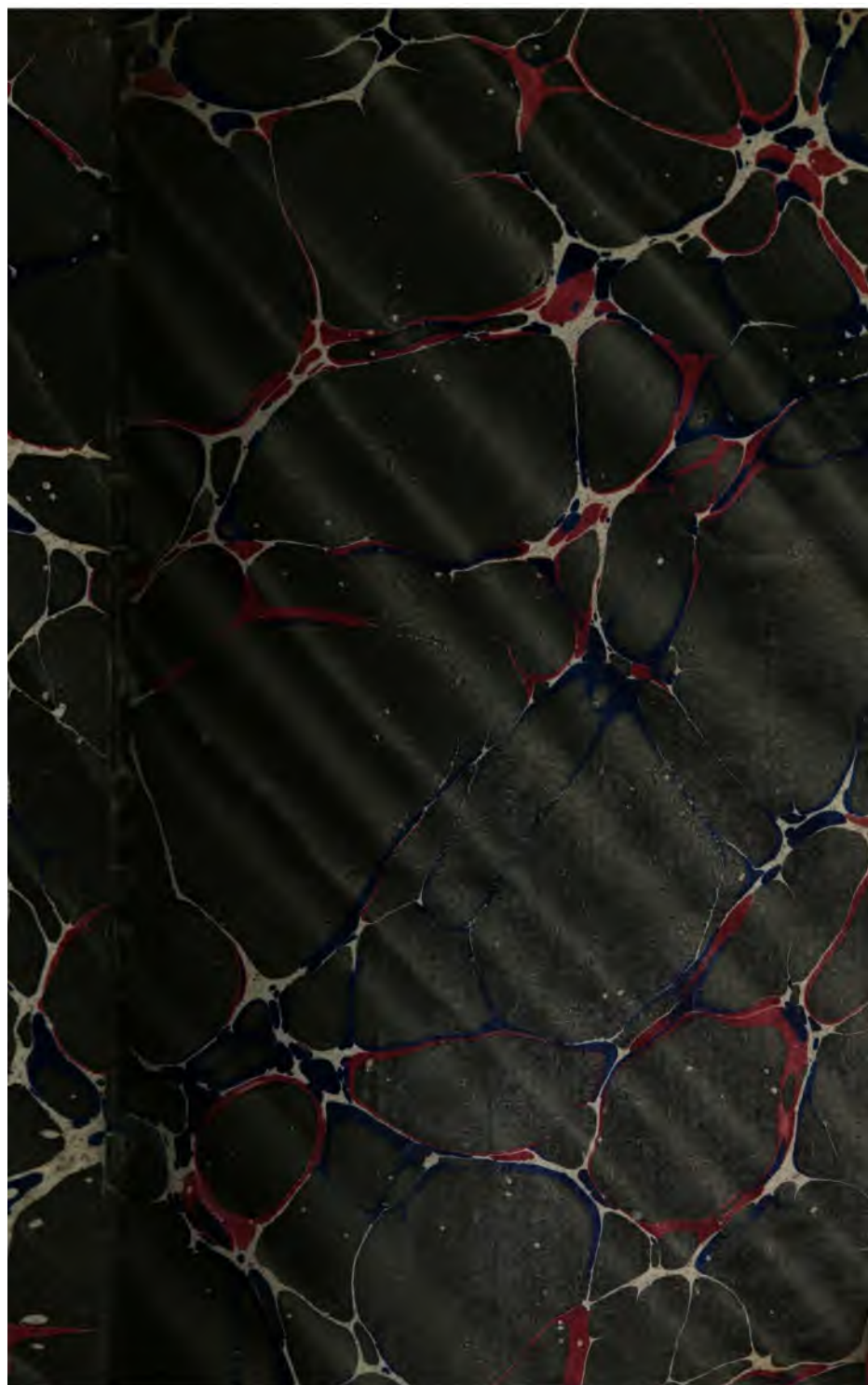
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**VIOLET;**

**OR,**

**THE DANSEUSE :**

**A PORTRAITURE**

**OF**

**HUMAN PASSIONS AND CHARACTER.**



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**1856**





# VIOLET.

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## CHAPTER I.

"A creature not too bright or good,  
For human nature's daily food,  
Made up of charms and simple wiles,  
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles."

WORDSWORTH.

"WHERE is Violet," inquired Mr. Woodville of his wife;  
"Lætitia, my dear, where is Violet?"

"Gone to change her shoes," answered Mrs. Woodville. "Dupas is coming. By the bye, we must ask him to dine with us soon, for he really takes great pains with Violet."

"Whenever you like, my dear. I have never determined what I mean to do with little Violet, but I am glad she is growing up so handsome, and she is such a graceful darling! She ought to marry a lord, at least, ought my little Violet."

"Well, if she is handsome, Violet may thank her mother for it,"

rejoined Mrs. Woodville, "though I didn't marry a lord, for all that; so Violet may do no better either, and it is as well not to fill her head with nonsense: no good can come of it, and she won't mind her studies."

"Now, Mr. Woodville, do you mean to call for me to-night in your cab, or am I to come home with Madlle. Laure? and where am I to have supper?"

"The Ballet, you know, as well as I do, never was or is over before one o'clock on Tuesday night: how then can I fetch you home at ten from Covent Garden?"

"Very well; but where do you mean to have supper, Charles?"

"Why, I have asked Gianini and Madame Clot, and the Norrises, to come to us to-night. We must have some Champagne, and I have desired Véry to send us a quart of white soup, and some *cotelettes aux petits poix*; then there is the cold ham, and you can get some of the partridges broiled that the Duke sent us the other day: and do see, Mrs. Woodville, that for once there is good bread-sauce at —"

M. Dupas was announced by a very young-looking gentleman, wearing an attempt at a livery,—and M. Dupas made his appearance. He was an old man, wearing a well-made wig; his clothes fitted him to a nicety, and everything in his externals even betrayed a justifiable desire to please; his countenance was lively and shrewd, and his manners aristocratic. M. Dupas spoke English wonderfully for a foreigner, and only now and then made use of expressions at variance with his meaning. He even then avoided much awkwardness by *ne se doutant pas* of his correctness, and no one ventured to amend his "Prose."

"I am most happy to see you, Mrs. Woodville; Mr. Woodville, you are too good," said M. Dupas, as he advanced a chair; "I am most entirely delighted to see you,—how is *la Petite*? I hope her slight touch of catarrh is quite at an end? Ah! *la voici*," continued the old man, while his face brightened at the entrance of his young pupil, of whom he was very fond.

"Did you find the shoes, Violet, love?" inquired Mrs. Woodville.

"I hope you have been enabled completely to master the little difficulty of the grand battement of the left foot?" observed M. Du-

pas; "three hours' steady attention every day would remove so very slight a difficulty. Now let us see,—very well,—begin with the exercises for the body first—*allons, commençons.*"

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Mr. Woodville earned his subsistence by playing on the violoncello; luckily for him, he played uncommonly well, and he was luckier still in having his talent appreciated and well remunerated. He easily obtained engagements at one or other of the great theatres, and generally formed one of the orchestra at the King's Theatre.

In his line of life Woodville would have been rich, but, like many professional men, he was extravagant and, to his credit be it said, generous,—so that, though never very poor he was only rich sometimes. His chief object, his delight, was—his only child—Violet.

Mrs. Woodville had been a beauty, and was still in tolerable preservation. She was very much like most other women,—having the coquetry, the caprice, the silliness and acuteness, agreeableness and weak-mindedness, common to the generality of her sex,—judging, at least, from all those with whom I happen to have been acquainted.

She was an actress, of rather a first class, and personated ladies, and confidantes, (those that gave advice,) and did speaking queens remarkably well; on the whole, Mrs. Woodville was much looked up to by the managers, for she was never vulgar, the thing most difficult to avoid on the English stage. Her pronunciation and her gestures never made the nerves of better bred people quiver with annoyance, or harrowed up their minds with disgust. She was always well dressed.—In short, on or off the stage, Mrs. Woodville was a very tolerable fine lady.

And now to talk of Violet, one of the prettiest creatures that ever was seen.

It may be as well to say, by way of parenthesis, that her real name was Violante,—at least, such was the name by which her mother had her christened. But her father thought it much too long, and said it was better to call her Violet.

With no reason that a special Providence should interfere;—without a governess—an angel that I know of,—or even a master in chancery, to look after her education, it should follow that Violet must needs have her ideas tinged, and her understanding improved, as it might be, by the class of people with whom she lived. She was, besides, not a little spoiled both by her parents and by M. Dupas.

In the estimation of these persons, the young lady's education had been immensely attended to, and Violet was really very accomplished, more thoroughly so perhaps than many damsels of greater pretensions, because her friends were fonder and prouder of her in proportion as her progress flattered their self-love. Violet seemed to know this by instinct, and the consciousness increased her desire to play, to sing, to speak French and Italian, —and to dance *en artiste*.

Her early education had been received in a French convent, and she had at this period returned home for good, about a year, and was now devoting a large portion of her time to achieve the ambitious views of M. Dupas, who fully intended her to become a first-rate opera-dancer. His own early days had worn away in that profession, but, having somehow grown wealthy, he now only gave lessons to the rising generation in a few great families, whose society, he said, he thought it worth his while to cultivate,—and devoted his leisure hours *con amore* to foster the talent of Violet Woodville.

The Woodvilles and M. Dupas were old friends, and, having no child of his own, theirs had become his pet, more or less, from the day of her birth. Since her return from France he had requested permission to instruct her in an art he thought sublime. Her parents were quite undetermined about letting Violet do any thing; *i. e.* any thing that was to look like a regular profession. It was more than half vanity on both their parts, which made them give a sort of tacit assent to their child's one day or other making her début on the boards of the King's Theatre.

Mrs. Woodville, notwithstanding the way she talked *sensible*, in the first page of our story, did look forward to this scheme as to a probable means of Violet's winning the heart of some rich heir apparent, who would propose to her immediately; and Mr.

Woodville liked the prospect, especially when Dupas inflamed him with the glory of being looked up to, as being the father of the first *danseuse* at the Opera.

Heirs apparent too came floating down the stream of his imagination, with this difference between him and his wife, that they occupied the back-ground of his mental picture, whilst with her they stood most glaringly in the foreground.

Of course Violet should only be permitted to accept some very particular engagement with the Laporte of the day, and then only if it did not fatigue her too much, and, moreover, only if she liked it; "for," said Mr. Woodville, "my little Violet shall not dance, or do any thing else that does not please her."

And, in the mean time, nine hours a day were often devoted to practising her steps.

Alas!

Violet was one fine spring morning greatly engrossed by her studies—by her dancing, that is to say, which was at present her great study—when she was interrupted by a tap at the door. The blithe voice with which she answered "come in!" announced the expectation of seeing a desired object.

A young lady threw open the door, who presented a striking contrast to Violet.

She was an uncommonly handsome brunette, with regular features, and a round full face, brilliant eyes, and glossy black hair and eyebrows, united with a very coquetish expression. As to figure, she had what is called a very fine one, according to some people's method of expressing themselves, at least; but it is as well, as I have heard these terms applied to monuments in petticoats, to specify that the young lady in question had not at all that sort of anatomy. Her *tournure* was graceful though somewhat theatrical, (habit, had become a second nature, perhaps,) and her white satin hat, her light-coloured, beautifully fitting silk gown, her *ponceau* scarf, her lemon-coloured kid gloves, and an exquisite *chaussure*, finish the sketch I wish to give of Emily Norris—Miss Emily Norris, to speak with more respect.

Violet was standing in the midst of her apartment, a little out of breath; her costume at that moment consisted of a white dimity petticoat, skirt rather short, short sleeves, and a handkerchief



round her neck. Her back hair was twisted into as small a compass as it well could be, and a pair of white satin slippers (not so *very* white) completed her attire.

At this period Violet Woodville was about seventeen, and uncommonly beautiful. Her face was of an oval contour, her complexion clear, and with a rich colour, exactly the pink of the peach—which is no exaggerated description of many an English complexion.

Her features were regular and full of expression, in which I am apt to think regular features are often deficient. Her eyes were very large, bright and lovely as the gazelle's. It was not easy to define their colour, but a light hazel would be the shade they were nearest to. She had a profusion of light brown hair, to ornament at will a little Grecian-formed head that would have served a goddess.

The impression she gave at first sight was that of a beautiful Hebe, with a soul full of mirth and *malice*; while the extreme quickness of her eye denoted a discernment of intellect which the finely-cut contour of her mouth confirmed; and when Violet Woodville laughed, the joyous intelligence that lit up her countenance rendered it inconceivably handsome.

Her figure was tall but slight, though rather inclined to *embonpoint*. She was formed with perfect symmetry : her limbs and her little feet were particularly striking from their beauty.

Graceful by nature as well as art, it was not easy to dream of anything fairer among womankind than Violet Woodville, —even there as she stood in her dimity petticoat, to receive her friend.

Miss Norris looked nineteen or twenty, and twenty she was. Great was the friendship between her and Violet. They had been together at the French convent, and similar connexions and pursuits had since kept up their intimacy; only superior years, and superior knowledge, (as Violet thought,) made her look up to Emily Norris with considerable deference.

“ My dear Emily,” and “ my dear Violet, how glad I am to see you,; were the sort of greetings that flowed profusely for five minutes, and then the young ladies drew chairs and sat down.

“ So, you are still going on with old Dupas,” said Miss Norris.

"Oh, yes; but Papa and Mamma have determined nothing about me yet,"

"Well, Violet, I wonder you allow that to go on. What's the use of your eternal practising of these steps, and wearing yourself to a thread-paper, with no one but old Dupas to have the pleasure of it? What's the use of all you have learnt, if it is to be done no good with? or how are you ever to have any luck, if you are not to be seen? Why, you ought to have been out these two years, I declare. You should have beheld me the other night in the new ballet! I had thunders of applause.—Did I describe my dress to you? I believe I did. My parts, you know, are mere acting, a sort of dumbshow, which I do not find too fatiguing, and that is the line I advise you to adopt. Many people think me quite equal to Brocard.—I am not engaged on Saturday : Mamma has made Laporte give her one of the boxes on the fourth tier, but we have asked him to supper afterwards, as well as the new singer, Madame——, I forget her name : you will all come, I hope. I expect it to be pleasant; Mamma will sing one or two songs out of the new opera, and we have asked a good many people."

"Oh, I shall like it of all things," replied Violet. "But do tell me, Emily, when did you see Mr. Harcourt last?—yesterday, as you hoped?"

"Yes, I saw him yesterday."

"Well?"

"Why I don't know what to say. He is undoubtedly very much struck with me, and is quite aware he must marry me, or give me up. I do not know what to think. Oh, dear Violet! what I would give to marry a gentleman! and I certainly think I ought, with my pretensions, after all—and I am sure other people often think so, who see me, that is. At all events, I hope you will do well, Violet," added Miss Emily, with much sentiment.

Violet coloured.

"But tell me, Emily, what is poor Mr. Larray doing? Is he not very unhappy?"

"Most wretched, I do believe; and so am I too, when I think of him : but of course, if I can get Mr. Harcourt to propose, I must

not think any more about Henri. After all, with the education Mamma has given me, and with the sort of *succès* I now have at the Opera, he cannot wonder I should make—I mean, he cannot wonder that I should feel, and Mamma too, that, though Mr. Harcourt is a gentleman, and all that, that still he may propose to me, and that then Mamma of course intends I should accept him. But is it not awkward—Henri, as well as Harcourt, is asked to supper on Saturday!”

“Indeed!—then what will you do?”

“Oh,” replied the young lady, with a laugh, “leave that to me; I can make Larray believe anything; and then, as to Mr. Harcourt, he is immensely conceited; I know he thinks all this time I am dying for him.”

“Good heavens, Emily! but how lightly you do talk of a person you wish to marry!”

“And who would not wish it in my situation? A nice difference it will be to me all my life, whether I am to be a Lady, or whether I have to dance for bread; besides the not being able to get all the things I should like—whether I have a carriage, or go without—or get all my hats from Madame Carson’s, or go on with Cérise, whom, as it is, I mean to leave off.—Of course I wish to marry Harcourt.”

“But you do not care for him, I believe, at all?”

“Oh, I care for him quite enough: besides, that is nothing—why, I would marry Henri to-morrow, if he were the *primo tenore*; but as it is, the thing would be a folly, Mamma says, though I think him charming; and I only wish he was Harcourt; but he—Mr. Harcourt, I mean—is such an uncertain person; sometimes he is so cold, and at times so capricious—so different from Henri, who is all love, gaiety, and devotion. Ah!”

Emily Norris paused, and for a brief moment looked almost softened. “Ah!” she continued, “and then he is so handsome!—Well, well, there is one thing I shall have if Mr. Harcourt marries me; I shall triumph over that audacious little Céleste, who dared to insult me by walking before me to the dressing-room, the other night, at the Opera, as if I had not the right to walk before a second-rate thing (for that is what she is) like her! She is handsome, that little Céleste, and can’t endure me or Mamma;

because, you know, Mamma is very particular with whom we associate ; and Céleste has no longer the best of characters."

" Indeed ! what a pity ; she has such pretty manners."

" Those French girls always have ; and they are great hypocrites."

" Mrs. Norris says she is waiting below, Miss, for you to go to rehearsal, she says, Miss," interrupted a maid, thrusting in her head at the half-opened door.

" For heaven's sake, dearest Violet," said Miss Emily, as she rose to depart, "do make that girl leave off saying ' Miss' ; it is so horrid vulgar."

" Oh, certainly ; but I did not know it was," answered Violet, innocently.



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## CHAPTER II.

“ What is the spring of human actions—say  
Why do we love, hate, govern, or obey ?  
Whence do our noblest efforts take their aim ;  
For what do we incur risk, guilt, and shame ?  
'Tis vanity—'neath more or less controul,  
The strong and ruling impulse of the soul.”

MR. WOODVILLE, and Mrs. Woodville, and Miss Woodville did as they had been requested, and went, after the opera, to Mrs. Norris's supper.

It is necessary to say a word or two about Mrs. Norris.

She had been a singer of some eminence ; and between her professional talents and, we may add, *ses beaux yeux*, very discreetly applied, had realized an income sufficient for her wants and those of her daughter, and which permitted her to indulge in some few luxuries besides, exclusively of the little suppers—to one of which we are about to introduce the gentle reader.

Mrs. Norris was quite a person of good character, not such, perhaps, as would be personified in the *beau idéal* of Mrs. Chaponne, or of Mrs. Hannah More, but still, as has been said, she had made use of *ses beaux yeux* with such uncommon discretion, that the most censorious persons could find nothing worse



to say of her than that, during ten years of her life passed in Italy for the improvement of her singing and for her health, she was very much admired, very gay, and delightfully amiable. Some, indeed, thought she was more particularly appreciated by a nobleman of large fortune, devoted to the fine arts; but nothing certain was ever known on this score.

The said nobleman married precisely at the same period that Mrs. Norris's husband returned from America, where he had been acting Othello and King John, George Barnwell and Scrub.

Mr. Norris, however, was a wretch of whom we will not speak, for all agreed that he behaved scandalously to his wife, and in fact, he was said to have abandoned her. As to Emily, who was born during the ten years,—Mrs. Norris's ten years in Italy I mean,—he seemed to have no affection for the poor child whatever.

These deserted creatures prospered, nevertheless, wonderfully. Mrs. Norris never sang, save and excepting when she felt in the humour. She had no debts, and, in her present position, besides the tolerably untarnished reputation which had stood so much wear and tear, she contrived, as has been observed, to have her little luxuries as well as comforts about her, and her *petits soupers* were sought after and ambitioned in the sphere in which she moved.

There were about twenty persons assembled when the Woodvilles entered Mrs. Norris's salon.

The society consisted of singers of celebrity; of about half a dozen young men of good family, coming under the denominations of roués, gamblers, or otherwise imperfect as to character, but still vastly entertaining, and very fashionable young men especially. Then there was a young architect, a remarkably conceited painter, a literary man who had written a book entitled "Songs of the Druids" (not generally known), a translator of French vaudevilles, who thought himself better than Scribe; two or three principal comedians, with a wife or two, women of entire respectability, though of no consideration; the Pasta, the Sontag, the Taglioni, and the De Beriot of the day;—these, with two or three attachés of foreign missions, and a few more such "small deer," were the component parts of Mrs. Norris's party.

On the whole, it is well to let the reader at once into the secret,

that it was chiefly given to induce Mr. Harcourt to propose to Miss Norris.

As yet he had not arrived ; but there were plenty of lights and ices, occasional singing, and desperate flirtations, chiefly between the young men of imperfect character and some charming women, who were there with their husbands, be it understood, for Miss Emily's sake. Indeed, on her account, and to impress Mr. Harcourt with a favourable opinion of the society she kept, Mrs. Norris had been particularly fastidious in her invitations on this occasion.

Miss Norris (whose maid I would rather not have been that evening) was dressed with the most studied attention, to give a good display to her beauty, to enhance it, if that were possible, and to be in the latest fashion, combining all this with many more items, that a person like myself, not versed in all the minutiae of female attire, is incompetent duly to expatiate upon. But all these niceties of art were intended to give relief to an air of infinite simplicity, and a *laissez aller* demeanour of exceeding abnegation of every idea connected with her personal appearance.

This acmé of perfection Emily conceived she had achieved, and she was greeted by her mother's triumphant approval. It was, undeniably, no small advantage to Emily, the being under the guidance of such a mother as Mrs. Norris. She was a woman such as there are but few to be met with. She possessed the supreme art of good arrangement ; nothing in her establishment was ever displaced. She had a horror of outward and visible errors, and a keen perception of the fitness of things. Everything connected with herself she shielded from the minutest obloquy, and it was her creed that none, if possible, should ever have occasion to descant upon the externals of life. She had the good taste to avoid pretension where it would have been laughable ; yet her French china, her chintz, her wines, her écarté tables, her music, her very flowers and ices were better than, or, at any rate, might stand competition with, those of any other house in London.

Emily was seated on an ottoman, and near her stood a handsome young man, well dressed, and of unassuming manners, so good looking, and with so good an air, that, if he were not what

is called a gentleman, there was no outward just cause or impediment to his being one.

His countenance expressed anything but happiness, and Miss Emily was evidently embarrassed in his presence; a feeling which, from whatever cause arising, she hardly cared in her spoitness to conceal.

"Why do you turn your head so often to the door?" asked the young man, rather impatiently.

Miss Norris coloured, and replied, "Mamma has desired me particularly to assist her in receiving these people. You forget that at home it is absolutely necessary to be civil."

"Oh! if that is the only reason, I have nothing more to say."

A little put out of temper, Emily rejoined:—

"What did you suppose was my reason, Monsieur Larray, as the one I have given never occurred to you?"

"I have no wish to say anything disagreeable, or to offend you just at this moment, but I should like to know whether you expect Mr. Harcourt this evening?"

"Mamma asked him—that is, I think she did."

"Are you really uncertain whether he is asked or not?"

"Ask Mamma,—there she is,—if you are so anxious to know, she can tell you,"—and to avoid saying more, Emily flew to meet the Woodvilles.

"How beautiful Violet looks to-night," she exclaimed to Mr. Woodville; "on the stage she would *far furore*."

At this moment two young men entered the room. The one who first advanced had good features, but a disagreeable expression; he was tall in person, with a nonchalant, indolent, and rather impertinent air; altogether, however, he was handsome. He glanced with an assured look round the room, and it was a great relief to his countenance, when it kindled with some pleasure, on beholding Emily Norris.

Nothing could be better than the reception Mr. Harcourt met with, (for Mr. Harcourt it was,) from both the Mother and Daughter of the house.

"You will allow me," he said, "to introduce a friend of mine, I am sure,—I knew, Mrs. Norris, I might venture to bring him;" and Mr. Harcourt presented the gentleman who had accompanied

him. " Mr. d'Arcy, Mrs. Norris,—Mrs. Norris, Mr. d'Arcy. "

Mr. Harcourt himself seemed actually forgotten in the embarrassment manifested to receive his friend; it appeared, in fact, as if the latter had occasioned a general sensation in the society.

The women—those at least who knew Mr. d'Arcy—evidently wished to attract his attention: those who did not know him did their best to induce him to seek their acquaintance. All the young men appeared glad to see, and to welcome him amongst them.

To Mrs. Norris he was now the first object, for with an intuitive perception, she beheld in Mr. d'Arcy the possible arbiter of her daughter's fate. Mrs. Norris had taken some trouble to analyze Mr. Harcourt's character, and she thought he was just the person to be decided by the opinion of another, as to whether or no it would be possible for him to marry Emily. She had before heard of his intimacy with Mr. d'Arcy, who was not unknown to her by name or character, and she feared him immensely.

It was perhaps lucky that Emily was not so much *au fait* at all this as her mother. She wished to please Mr. d'Arcy as Harcourt's friend, but without foreseeing all the importance of so doing.

Violet, in the mean time, knowing few people, modest by nature, and considering herself not yet come out, had discovered a corner, into which she retreated as much as she could, and where she found leisure to observe all that was passing, until her attention became strongly riveted by one person only. The one person who thus arrested her regards was Mr. d'Arcy; and, had Violet herself been interrogated as to the wherefore, she would have been much at a loss to account for the sort of fascination under which she laboured.

It was not that Mr. d'Arcy struck her as handsomer or more pleasing than many others whom she had seen, or that he possessed any single charm to strike her forcibly and at once. But his presence filled up some imperfect and undefined feeling, if I may so express it. A strange sort of contentment stole over her as she gradually sank into reverie, while yet noticing every change of bearing in the new comer. It seemed to Violet a pleasant event in her existence to have met this person, and she dwelt upon his presence with a secret pleasure that she was herself hardly

aware of; her mind, however, became impressed with one object, and her observation centered upon it.

Mr. Harcourt soon took a seat by Emily, and a very animated conversation was carried on between them.

She was really uncommonly handsome, and the sort of person to make a vast impression on most men, and this evening she looked more than usually charming. On Mr. Harcourt's seating himself by Emily, Mr. Larray disappeared unseen by her, perhaps at that moment uncared for,

When Mr. d'Arcy was introduced to Miss Norris, he conversed with her for a short time, and the melodious voice and discreet words of Emily could not fail to produce an impression favourable to her; but at this moment it was that something struck Violet as unpleasing in Mr. d'Arcy, — his smile was cold, and his regard expressed penetration, but indifference.

At supper, Emily sat between Harcourt and his friend. To Violet's surprise, as she was following her father to the supper-room, Mr. Larray re-appeared, and offered her his arm.

"I almost thought you were gone," exclaimed Violet.

"I did go, Miss Woodville, but I am returned; I conceived I was wrong, and that reflection causes me to be here now."

"But what made you discover all at once that you were wrong?"

"My better judgment, I believe, as I walked down the street. Where will you sit, Miss Woodville?" —

During the supper, Mr. Harcourt rather kept in the background, that his friend might engross Emily: and at one time, Mr. d'Arcy's animated countenance and eager conversation gave him the air of making love upon his own account.

Emily was in the highest spirits: she thought she had won a new admirer. She laughed and talked—her complexion glowed, she shook her ambrosial curls, and her eyes were dazzling with the consciousness of success.

Mr. d'Arcy, bent over her, and once Violet thought he looked as if he admired her very much. — Mr. Harcourt seemed forgotten: at the moment he appeared to think so, too, for he suddenly reinstated himself in his share of the conversation with Emily.

Some one asked Mr. d'Arcy to drink wine: he turned to

answer, and Violet was again struck with the cold indifference of his expressive countenance. From his great attention to her friend, and the effect it had produced upon her, it was reasonable to suppose that some trace of the feelings of the previous instant would have lived for a moment's space, but no — it was the same regard — almost contemptuous in its calmness, and no trace of emotion was perceivable.

“What is that gentleman's name?” inquired Mr. Larray.

“He is called Mr. d'Arcy, What do you think of him?”

“He is very good-looking.”

“Oh, I did not mean his looks.”

“Well, I am also struck by his being different from most other people. His air is good, but it is peculiar. He is bored here, or perhaps he is bored everywhere.”

“How do you know he is bored?”

“Look at his countenance.”

“Ah, now; but it was animated enough an instant ago.”

“What? when he was talking to Emily? Yes; he was endeavouring to understand her.”

“To understand her?”

“Yes; I mean the sort of person she is; he was endeavouring to penetrate her mind.”

“Oh! well, I hope he has succeeded.”

“He thinks he has, I dare say. Now I do not much like this Mr. d'Arcy; there is something about him that wounds the *amour propre* of other people. But yet I could much rather forgive Emily for behaving ill to me for that man's sake, than I can for Mr. Har——”

“Hush—he will hear you. But why this distinction?”

“The one she might prefer to —— the other she cannot — she does not, I know.”

“But yet you say, you don't like Mr. d'Arcy,”——( the rising from supper interrupted Violet. )

It was by this time Sunday morning : one of the ladies, whose face was rather the worse for wear, poor thing! proposed sacred music. She had never heard any, and was very curious to hear some, she said, and Mrs. Norris she knew sang that sort of thing so well. Being uncommon, the proposal succeeded



vastly ; and the roués and the charming women were in ecstasy !

Harcourt and D'Arcy approached each other, and took seats, without noticing, apparently, that a large vase filled with roses and mignonette, and an alabaster Venus embracing Adonis rising from the midst of the flowers, concealed an occupant of the chair behind the tripod table on which stood the vase ; or else, under cover of " O Absalom, my son ? " they conceived their words would fall unheeded.

Or, perhaps, between his desire to talk to his friend — his passion — and the champagne he had drunk Mr. Harcourt might have let matters of greater moment than this pass without scrutiny. Violet, therefore, overheard their conference ; and, thanks to the scanty drapery of the Venus, could partially observe the countenance of one of the speakers.

" What do you think of her ? " enquired Mr. Harcourt, in an agitated tone of voice.

" As to looks ? — that she is beautiful."

" D'Arcy, I am desperately in love with that girl."

" Yes — it is a pity she thinks she can marry you."

" Oh, but she has no reason for thinking so, and I doubt if she does ; in fact, I have to-night been playing a desperate game with her. — I talked of going abroad, and dropped a few words as if I meant to cut her."

" Have you ever thought of trying her affection ? it does answer occasionally, you know. Have you flattered her sufficiently ? have you adored her sufficiently ?"

" Oh, every thing ! She is proof against every attack."

" Then she must think you a marrying man : how very unlucky you are, my poor fellow ! it is the worst notion she could have taken into her head. I do not know how to advise you."

" I am passionately in love — there is nothing I have not done."

" Why, I am not so sure of that. — you are so — d indolent, — have you sworn oaths enough ? Good heavens ! I would feign Catholic, and bring to the hammer every saint in the calendar."

" Oh, don't be a fool, D'Arcy when I am distracted."

"Seriously, then. Have you tried suicide?"

"No, I have not yet."

"Well, then—go on that tack to-night,—blowing your brains out, mind — poisoning, or drowning does not much touch a woman now-a-days; but they don't like fire-arms."

"But if that fail?"

"In that case, I cannot help you. With those eyes the girl has no business to be coy; and I am much mistaken if her mother ought not to be put in the pillory for her very virtue."

"But my Emily!" exclaimed Harcourt, in a love-sick voice, "give me your candid opinion of her, D'Arcy. I can bear to hear any thing from you."

"Well, I think her very handsome: magnificent eyes, and the figure of a goddess. I should like her myself."

"But would you marry her?"

"Marry her! I marry her?—*No!*—my ideas on that point may be uncommon, but they are unalterable!"

"Then, what would you say, if I told you I had serious thoughts of it?"

It was a faint, but bitterly-sneering laugh with which D'Arcy replied to this appeal.

"Simply," he answered in words at last, "that if you ever found reason to repent your choice, you would deserve no pity. — The world would despise your weakness,—I should, for one, and you would live to curse the most irretrievable folly you could possibly commit. For heaven's sake, Harcourt, do not be such a fool," continued Mr. d'Arcy, with hushed vehemence,—"*marry that girl! an opera-dancer! and the daughter of that woman, whose very outside better-seeming, is a greater abomination than the undisguised profligacy of that little French devil I showed you last night! Never—never! I beseech you, Harcourt—think twice of such perdition as this act of madness would be!*"

"Ah! you have no heart, and are incapable of comprehending me."

"Possibly, in your acceptance of the term; but you asked me for the truth.—I have given it you in all its nakedness, and would tell it you, again and again, to save you from such a fate as this, a

fate in which it amazes me that you can even dream of involving yourself."

"But you make no allowance for circumstances; she is virtuous, and would not such a creature as that make venial any error I might commit?"

"No; there are some things that not any number, or any quality, of *such creatures* can palliate."

"You are a brute, D'Arcy."

"Thank you," replied Mr. d'Arcy, calmly : "you requested my advice, and I bestowed it generously : if the truth offend, I am blameless; so now let us go and hear "Jephthah's Daughter."

D'Arcy rose, and moved towards the piano; whilst his friend, with inherent spoiltness, devoted himself, for the rest of the evening, still more assiduously, to Emily Norris.

It was a great relief to Violet, when this conversation ended. Well aware that it had not been meant for her ears, she would have moved from her ambush at its very commencement, had not excessive timidity absolutely fixed her to the spot, and the additional awkwardness of betraying her presence, as the supposed tête-à-tête proceeded, continued to rivet her to her seat.

Her father was attending to the music; and her mother was absorbed in self-complacent admiration opposite a mirror, and in listening to the whispered remarks of some of her neighbours. Mr. Larray was standing in a door-way somewhat apart from the society, and seemed occupied with no very agreeable train of thought : he at last espied Violet alone, and approached her.

"I shall not see Miss Norris again for some time, Miss Woodville," said Mr. Larray, "and perhaps you would be kind enough to tell her, that I avoided bidding her good bye, because I feel wretched; and I doubt if such a parting, as ours would too likely be, could make me less so; but tell her I shall be rejoiced to know that she is happy, and that I do not persevere in pressing my attachment upon her, lest I should interfere with results much more splendid than any my alliance could offer her"—(Mr. Larray sighed; ) "and, on the whole, more—that is to say, better for her—I begin to think so now; and it would be preferable to die each day than to marry Emily, if she thought it a sacrifice. Adieu, Miss Woodville!—you deserve a better lot than to be one of these

people : you are not even a coquette, and I hardly think you will ever become one."

Violet began an answer; but Mr. Larray left her ere she had uttered three words.

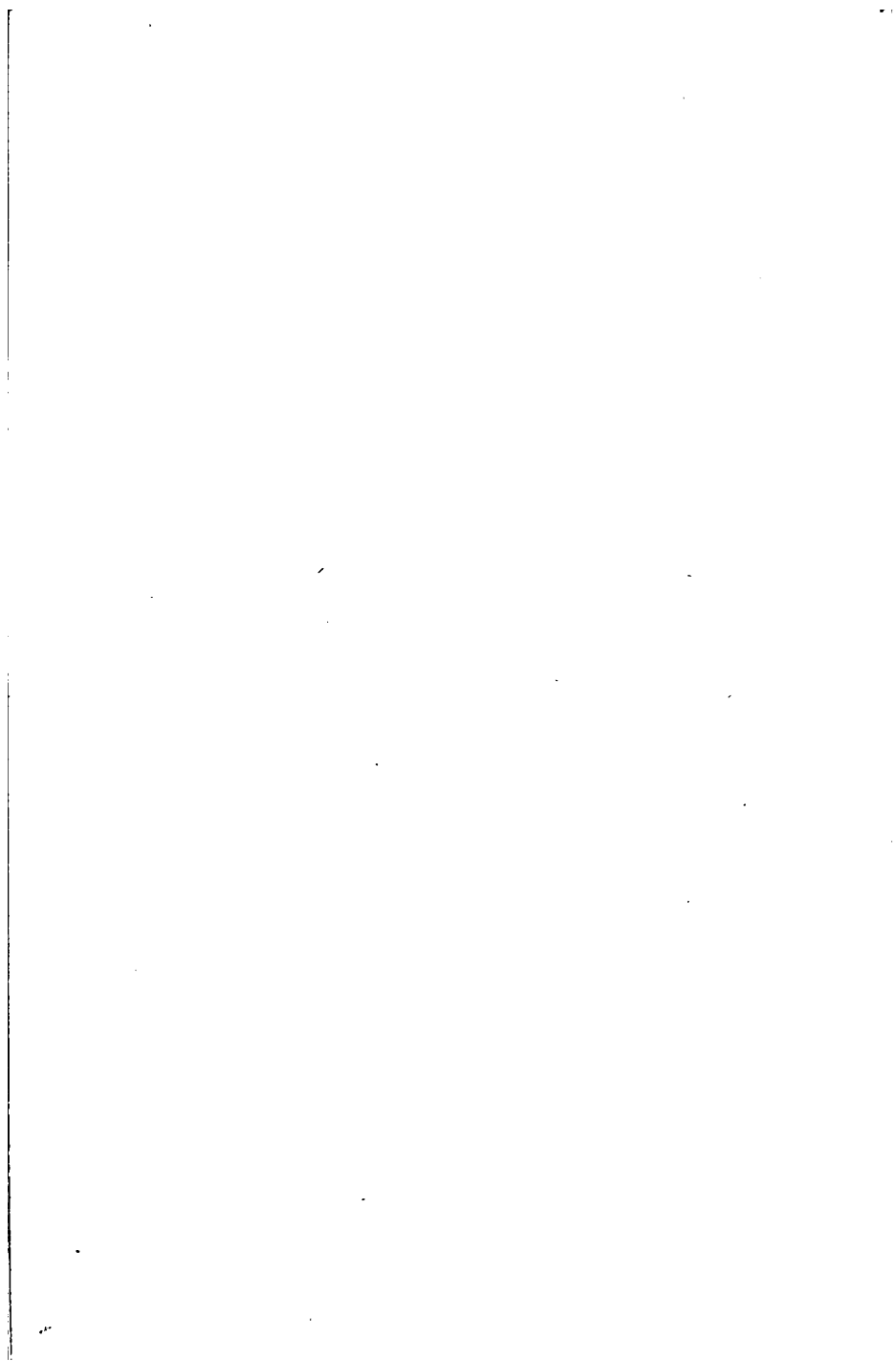
There was now more talking than singing, and more of laughing than of either. The flirtations were getting desperate. The middle of the room was an absolute desert, while the boudoirs and door-ways were filled by tender couples. Arm-chairs and book-cases, cabinets and commodes—anything, in short, that could make an angle with anything, was dexterously put in requisition.

A groupe still remained round the piano-forte; but it consisted only of ladies with jealous husbands extant in the room, and of men, like Woodville, honestest than the others, and with incumbances.

Harcourt's countenance, as he leant over the back of Emily's arm chair, still bore the shade of displeasure, which his friend's remarks had called up. It is true "*Il ne faut pas toujours avoir raison, pour plaire,*" says the Prince de Ligne; but it is no less true, "*il faut souvent plaire pour avoir raison.*"

D'Arcy himself occupied a place near the music, and, from time to time, was assiduous to Mrs. Norris. Some people might have fancied he liked that discreet lady, and Violet would have been of that opinion, had she not overheard his abuse of her. I rather think, too, Mrs. Norris herself thought that Mr. d'Arcy liked her; and she was a very good judge. He was, however, one of the first to withdraw. Then Violet began to yawn, and, taking courage, advanced to her father.

"Are you not going home, Papa ?" she inquired; "it is very late, I think."



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### CHAPTER III.

“Pardon this digression;  
But, whatsoe’er may be a man’s profession,  
Whether the trade be noble, or ignoble,  
Whether he steer a frigate, or a coble,  
He finds some vast importance in the calling,  
And deems the universe is kept from falling,  
And all the interests of man affected,  
By that to which his talents are directed.”—*ANON.*

THE evening passed at Mrs. Norris’s had given Violet much to think of. It was the first time she had found herself in so mixed a circle. Her mother had hitherto taken her very little into society, and this evening’s events had given her much to reflect upon. She had gained experience, but her reflections thereupon were not all agreeable ones.

Accustomed, during her short life, to one class only, she had had no means of forming a judgment as to its comparative merits, and with Emily Norris, as her most intimate friend, Violet was not likely to be led to much abstract reasoning that could prove correct. Her knowledge acquired from books was not of a very serviceable kind. Her father possessed a collection of French dramatic authors, and some odd volumes of Pope, of Milton, and of Shakspeare; a few plays of Otway, Congreve, and Rowe; the works of Sheridan



and Mrs. Inchbald; a good many magazines, volumes of farces, etc., etc. Such was the composition of Mr. Woodville's library. Now and then he brought home a new novel, lent him by a friend, which was often returned unread; but, generally, the most modern prose that entered his house was an evening paper or the "Age," varied occasionally by a French vaudeville, or the new play as then performing at the theatres royal Covent Garden, or Drury Lane.

Miss Woodville's education, *i. e.* her external accomplishments, had been so much attended to, that she had not had time to acquire a love of reading, and no one in her whole life had ever inculcated it upon her as necessary, or even desirable. Violet, then, had, as may be imagined, but scanty means of appreciating her own condition, and was not aware that players, singers, and dancers were the light weight, and not the heavy ballast in the scale of social opinion; nor that disagreeable people of a much lower grade ranked above them in the statistics of respectability.

She did not know how seldom in the minds of most people morality and an opera-dancer were in approximation. Still less was she aware that the sentiments of her parents, and even her own, were influenced by their mode of existence, and that no purity of mind, no principles, however well regulated, no stoicism of virtue, however well guarded, can utterly withstand the force of example.

Either the virtuous become repulsive and austere from excess of precaution, or sin doubly by exclaiming too eagerly against "the mote that is in their brother's eye," or chime in with the small vices and gentler frailties of the corrupt; not doubting, while baser crimes are kept at an immeasurable distance, that so wide apart are their present practice and real excellence.

No models of right and wrong had been set before Violet, but such as (if I may use the expression) she had found ready to her hand. Her native impulses were all good, but example had done nothing to strengthen them. Good inclinations are like raw materials, and must have much trouble taken with them before they can be made serviceable.

Mr. d'Arcy's contemptuous observations upon Mrs. Norris, and his frivolous praise of her daughter, placed them in a light in which Violet had never seen them before. She then passed in review

Emily's calculating encouragement of Mr. Harcourt, and her ungenerous treatment of Mr. Larray. She compared her friend and her mother with many others that she knew of, and was compelled to own that they did not lose by the comparison.

When once we begin to reason, the process is a rapid one, and it was a sickening moment to Violet when she drew the conclusion that she herself was one of the despised class, whose degradation a thousand D'Arcys would be ready to infer; and that no virtue could be a shield against the opprobrium of marrying an opera-dancer.

But why was D'Arcy's opinion to weigh so greatly with her? Whatever was the reason, it did—it might be his voice, his manner, his air, that thus impressed her. But why not say at once he pleased,—and leave the how, to be defined by others, who in like manner have been charmed, while the days, the months, and the years have flown by, yet have they never paused and asked, "*Wherefore?*"

During the latter part, however, of this, to her, eventful evening, the charm had been somewhat broken: Violet half feared that he who had so excited her interest, wanted kindness of heart; she likewise felt a little terror at the harshness of his remarks; but even these considerations could not change the nature of her predilection; a feeling, by-the-bye, which neither by word nor look had Mr. d'Arcy upheld for himself,—for, beautiful as Violet Woodville was, he had never noticed, most probably, had never seen her.

La destinée que Dieu nous a faite, n'est jamais celle que nous nous faisons à nous-mêmes \*.

Violet suddenly determined she would not be an opera-dancer, but she was quite at a loss how to convey this resolution to her parents. She rarely now gave the same attention to assist the unwearyed zeal of M. Dupas, who was at fault in discovering the cause of his pupil's diminished ardour, and urged upon her family with more than his usual seriousness, the importance of seeking an engagement with the manager of the King's Theatre.

About this time there was a new ballet in preparation, but the

\* Massillon.

heroine was not to be the chief dancer. This character was given to Miss Norris, whose forte was in the pantomimic parts. The ballet was intended by the manager to be a chef-d'œuvre; there were in it a good many first-rate, prominent parts, so that he would be enabled with less squabbling than usual to content the ambitious views of the whole corps de ballet. The dresses were to be such as had never yet been seen. The scenery, the decorations,—but we will not write the whole of a newspaper paragraph.

In the course of the ballet a Venus was to appear, and Miss Norris was to be the Venus. There was very considerable trouble in determining in what attire (perhaps if any) the goddess ought to appear.

It was, in fact, a very difficult point to decide. Her earthly representative was inclined to a blaze of silver and jewels, while there was a strong party in favour of a little plain gauze, and much *tricot*.

There being no original costume to refer to, was the cause of so much indecision. Upon the whole, the predominating opinion maintained it to be quite indecorous to adorn a Venus with earthly embellishments, and that the object to be aimed at, was to give as ethereal an appearance as could be attained, without too great a risk of a remonstrance from the Bishops.

Miss Norris again had a great idea of precious stones becoming her exceedingly; and during the dispute a mock tiara of diamonds and rubies was always in her mind's eye, encircling her radiant brow. She remembered once before producing a great sensation in some head gear of this kind, and matters were getting to look unpleasant, for Miss Norris was not a little spoilt, and had a very good opinion of her own merits and judgment; when lo! a fortnight before the ballet was to be brought forward, in getting out of a dirty hackney-coach at one of the rehearsals, her foot slipped on the muddy step, and Emily screamed.

It was true she had only violently sprained her ankle, but all hopes of being able to glide down from the scenic heaven upon a cloud, on that day fortnight, were put out of the question by this unlucky accident.

The manager, the dancers, the figurantes, the scene-painters,

and even the very scene-shifters were in consternation ; nobody of course pitied the only person who really suffered.

The season was already far advanced ; and if the ballet were not produced now, it would not be worth the manager's while to let it appear at all. At the same time he did not see what Venus there was that he could depend upon. He reviewed, in his mind's eye, every demoiselle of the green-room (by-the-bye, there is no green-room at the Opera), but not one of them was sufficiently handsome : there was one who might do very well, as to face, but was somewhat too bulky in person. In vain the manager depicted to himself the young lady, laced in to the uttermost power of the strongest stay-lace—there would still exist a preponderance in her form which would not exactly do for a Venus ; and where to turn for a better, he knew not.

At this critical juncture M. Dupas, as an old intimate of the manager's, was consulted by him on the momentous topic. Visions of glory at once flitted before the intellectual optics of the dancing-master ; he hastened to have them realized. Yes, he knew a young lady, of the most distinguished beauty, full of grace and talent for the profession—in a word, a pupil of his own. Could she be persuaded to undertake the engagement, and did it suit the views of Monsieur to give her one, he (Dupas) could not but view it as a compact mutually advantageous and desirable.

All this sounded well ; but the manager, who was a cautious man, evinced hesitation. He said he must see the young lady ; he would go the length of believing all that M. Dupas said of her accomplishments, but still he must see her before he in the slightest degree compromised himself.

The manager, in accordance with a previous arrangement with M. Dupas, made at the termination of their conference, called on the following day on Mr. Woodville, with whom he was previously acquainted, and had an opportunity of satisfying himself of the correctness of Dupas' report

Violet was in the room with her father when the manager entered : she was introduced to him, and, all unconscious of the object of his visit, she bore his scrutinizing looks with modest assurance ; and, having staid long enough in the room to complete the excellent impression her first coup-d'œil had conveyed to him,

made the earliest excuse for retiring, and left her father and this important personage to their deliberations. M. Dupas shortly after knocked at the door, and was added to the council of three—for a council it soon became,

Mr. Woodville was dazzled by the brilliant chance it offered for his daughter's début; but Mrs. Woodville, he said, must be consulted—their mutual intentions respecting their daughter had hitherto been so undetermined, etc. etc. : he would, in a day or two, inform the manager whether Miss Woodville could avail herself of his very obliging proposal; and after a little more conversation of the same sort, the manager took his leave, thinking that Mr. Woodville only held out, in order to obtain the offer of a higher salary, and which he fully resolved to augment on the morrow.

"Do you hesitate, Mr. Woodville?" exclaimed M. Dupas, the moment they were alone.

"You forget my wife, my dear Dupas."

"Your wife! Her own mother can never imagine any opposition to the future glory of *la petite* : can any thing be more ravishing than the prospect of the début she will make? The new ballet, for which the whole of the town are mad with knowing of! To be at once *lancée*, as the object of enthusiasm and admiration and *extasiement*! What is there that she may not expect? I am all breathless with the anxiety of my feelings; that the whole desire of my life should be so *sublimement réalisé*,—and *est-il possible* that you are not penetrated, in and out, with your good fortune! This it is to be an Englishman!—the porter that you drink, and your bad climate, I suppose; so that you have no fine sentiments—no conception of the really great : you are incapable of things elevated; and Miss Woodville, my Violet—my little child—my pupil—my bijou! your own daughter—will be abandoned by you—she is to be sacrificed, the *pauvre enfant*! *Hélas! on a de grands malheurs dans ce monde.*"

M. Dupas ceased speaking; but he sighed profoundly. The poor man's anguish was not feigned. Woodville, who was used to his tirades, said a few pacifying words, and then went really to consult Mrs. Woodville.

The manager, in the meantime, as he left the house, walked up

the street, muttering and thinking to himself—"Beautiful creature, certainly! and will do—but she must be rouged with care: I can take an opportunity of seeing to that myself. While they are at their first engagements, these husseys are tractable: yes, if I am not mistaken, I have made a *find*: the ballet will attract, if it is only by means of the Venus; and I am not sure whether the beauty of this young Houri will not look much more ethereal than that of the black-eyed Norris girl. This one is the most uncommon style of the two. I only foresee one difficulty—she is too respectable. The effect would be perfect, and my fortune would be made, if I could only have her properly dressed: gossamer robe, fastened by a zone—neck and shoulders quite bare, or a mere loop, that she might not be called Eve in the newspapers; and, to save appearances with the Saints, . . . .—We shall see; I am sure it will answer; and the price of Opera-glasses will rise."

Violet was taken by surprise, and found she had not courage to make her parents an avowal of the dislike she felt to the career they now in good earnest desired she should embrace. They considered it an opportunity not to be lost.

Violet felt ashamed of her own feelings, perhaps of not having sooner discovered them; besides, after the pains that had been taken with her, how was she to find the heart to declare that it had all been time thrown away?

She thought of poor M. Dupas and his despair at such a result to his many lessons. She then reflected on the money expended upon her education, and the bad return it would be to refuse the only pecuniary means she knew she could ever have in her power of aiding her parents.

The finale was, that, between shame and shyness, and the innate sweetness of her disposition, Violet's resolution gave way. But the sad feeling of self-degradation that accompanied her compliance made her in secret shed bitter tears, and often did she wish that her lot had been differently cast, while she almost lost the hope of rising above the level on which she mentally conceived herself to be placed.

Still she bestowed attention on her profession, more even than she had devoted to it for months past. She desired, at least, to excel in her new career.

She attended rehearsals as little as possible, for these she hated, but at home, and with the unremitting pains-taking of M. Dupas, she lost no opportunity of studying her part. It was not a very difficult one, and had it been more so, Violet's extreme beauty, and an exquisite costume, would have counterbalanced many defects in the performance.

In the meantime the renown of the new ballet had gone abroad, and when the night for its first performance arrived, not a box was vacant, and there was not standing room in the pit. The most interesting conversations were momentarily suspended as the curtain, drawing up, discovered the first scene to the expectant audience.

"They say there is to be a new dancer to-night, the most beautiful girl that was ever beheld," said Lord John to his Pendant.

"An Englishwoman, by the name, though," said a lady, "so she will be awkward I am afraid; all Englishwomen are."

"That's true,—but there's that Miss Norris did it uncommonly well. Horace," whispered the speaker, "did not she break her leg or something, jumping out of Harcourt's cab?"

"Either her leg, or her rib, or something. They swear Harcourt means to marry her."

"Does he? then I will tell Crocky to give him good advice and desire him not."

"Hush,—here is the new girl, by Jupiter! If I have not dropped my opera-glass!"

It was in the middle of one of the most enchanting scenes of the ballet that Violet Woodville, personifying the goddess of love and beauty, made her first public appearance on a stage.

Nervous to the last degree, Violet almost fainted under the violence of her emotions. The stage-lamps restored her courage a little, as they always do, and the imperious necessity of not giving way, did still more to sustain her. She profited by the advice of M. Dupas,—to take no heed of the audience, and to think of her part only, not of her judges.

Suddenly a loud rush of applause rang on her ears, and the young girl was again on the point of being overcome. These were not the whispered tones of admiration falling like music on the ear of the unprotected novice, but the loud and unexpected shout of

the admiring multitude that first greeted the Violet, as incense to her beauty. Some minutes passed ere she could quite regain her self-possession.

The scene was at length over, and then she threw herself into her father's arms and shed tears. M. Dupas, in his enthusiasm, quite felt as if she were his own child as he pressed her to his heart. Tears streamed down his cheeks without his knowing it, while Mr. Woodville, as a younger man, felt quite ashamed of his own emotion, and tried to smile and listen to the congratulations of friends and by-standers.

Woodville himself was engaged as one of the orchestra, but for this night he had requested his congé.—“ I could not play,” he said, “ whilst my daughter danced.”

Nothing could exceed the entire success that attended Miss Woodville. Her beauty and her extreme gracefulness left nothing to desire,—but above all, her uncommon beauty! Her figure was so finished by nature and set off by art, that it alone represented perfectly the *beau idéal* of a Venus. Still, lovely as she looked on the stage, it was considered necessary to have a closer inspection, ere a decided opinion could be pronounced by the cognoscenti, ready as they were to acknowledge that, at the distance from which they had seen her, it was no exaggerated praise to declare she looked divine.

Deafening plaudits hailed the finale, and even the ladies lingered in their boxes to see the last of “ the new opera-dancer.”

Her parents' joy, and her own most natural vanity, gave some consolation to Violet in the first steps of the path on which she had so reluctantly entered. In one week a new existence opened to her.

She never went to the theatre without the protection either of her father or her mother, and in this respect it is due to her parents to say that they did their duty.

The young men rushed behind the scenes to make love, and settlements too, if they might; but Violet's modest manner, and her father's watchfulness, shielded her from the lightest word of offence. By turns, surprised, excited, flattered, pleased, and rarely mortified, Violet gained courage, and earned her disinction. She made new acquaintances, she mingled in a larger circle, and



acquired some of that worldly knowledge in which she had hitherto been so deficient.

She was gay, if not happy besides, for she had little time for reflection, and nothing positive to regret. Often too the real, or seeming brilliancy of her position, would shed its enchantment over the visions that rose to her imagination, as they will do to that of every young person who has the world before them still.

Delightful moments, when all the disagreeable realities of life are obliterated by the brief joys of an hour! and when in a paradise of fiction it is possible to forget that if we are not to be single among our fellow-creatures, as happiness is not theirs, neither will it exist without alloy for ourselves! Yet would I say, dream on; for, after-life may have its pleasures and its sanguine hopes, but never again can we derive, as we have done, from the resources of a bright, unbruised spirit, that poetry of thought that can create a heaven on earth to the very young. The scene is sure to change, and the clouds of sorrow are ever gathering, though unseen by us, ready to burst and dim the sunshine of our happiest moments. Though again and again the elastic mind rises above the storm, yet we see that mind crushed by degrees, and faintly growing to mistrust present happiness, while futurity is only seen through the medium of the worst despondency. Alas! to change it thus, how much sorrow must have lingered o'er the now subdued and doubting spirit, that once knew but the certainty of every scheme it cared to realize!

Miss Norris was still confined to the house with her sprained ankle, for having walked about when she was told to keep on her sofa, it suddenly became worse, and she was now obliged to be careful from fear of another relapse.

Emily thought she was very glad of Violet's *auréole de gloire*, but in her heart she was a little jealous, which, however, it was very natural she could not conceive herself capable of being in the least possible degree.

Miss Norris amused herself every day during her illness, by putting on the most becoming dressing gowns she could find, and the listening for Mr. Harcourt's cab, either driving to her door for him to inquire very particularly how she was, or oftener still to make those inquiries himself in person.

Still he did not propose, and the season was drawing to an end.

Emily, however, grew more virtuous every day, and Mrs. Norris was beginning to think whether it would not be a good thing for her to do, as she had read in fashionable novels that managing mammas sometimes did; *i. e.* declare that her daughter's affections were irreparably engaged, and her happiness destroyed; and that therefore Mr. Harcourt must either discontinue his visits, or he must propose.

Mrs. Norris discussed these measures with Emily, but did not find her daughter so docile as she was wont to be; and Miss Norris one day flatly told her mother that she begged the affair with Mr. Harcourt should be left to her own caring for, lest he should be worried away from her altogether by the manœuvring of other people, which Emily averred always spoiled these affairs.

Miss Norris was agreeably roused one morning from a fit of low spirits by the rapid wheels of Mr. Harcourt's cabriolet, driving to her door much earlier than usual.

He must be come to propose, thought Emily. "Mamma," exclaimed the young lady at the top of her voice, for mamma was in another room, "Mamma, am I becoming? Mamma, where's mamma? mamma — don't you hear, am I becoming?" Mrs. Norris now rushed in, and the sight of Emily rolling her curls round her fingers united to her important question, and the most imploring interrogative eyes, told her, at once, of the arrival she had not sooner learnt.

"Here, my dear, — here's a little, — there's yet a moment, — I will detain him — make haste, — not too much, mind." These broken sentences were spoken with reference to an old bit of rouge which the provident parent drew from her pocket, and which with the last injunction of "not too much, mind," she thrust into her daughter's hand.

"Thank you, mamma," said the young lady in a sweetly grateful voice, and the right shade being cleverly applied, Emily was happy in her mind, and felt she had all her smiles at command to enable her to overcome this hitherto obdurate, but not hopelessly unproposing man.

"My dear Emily," said Mr. Harcourt, "I am anxious to know how soon you will be well enough to join a water-party down to

Greenwich, we are to make it quite a fête; Stanmore is to manage it all, and it is to be the pleasantest thing in the world; but as I can have no pleasure without you, it is quite necessary for me to know when you can be one of us."

Though this was not a proposal, Emily foresaw a very agreeable day, and she brightened considerably, while, with the aid of Mrs. Norris, she named the time about which the apothecary might consider it good for her, and pretty good for himself, that she should be emancipated from the sofa.

The point was arranged at last; and long after Mr. Harcourt left her, Emily was still building castles in the air on a new foundation derived from the expected day of pleasure.

Violet was now taken up in so many different ways that she had not so much leisure as formerly; and Emily being obliged to remain at home, they had not met very lately. Miss Norris wrote her a note, requesting her to come and see her that evening, if she could, with the intention of learning whether Violet Woodville had been invited earlier than herself to Lord Stanmore's Greenwich party. That she was, or would be invited was certain; for Emily had already heard of the open admiration Lord Stanmore professed for her beautiful friend; and she was also anxious to obtain some authentic information upon this subject.

It was very true that amongst the many who were struck with the uncommon loveliness of our heroine, there was one very young man, of a somewhat peculiar character, undeveloped, but perhaps not the less pleasing.

Lord Stanmore was among the first to make acquaintance with the new opera-dancer; but he was surprised and annoyed when he found how difficult it would be for him to obtain her affections—that is, her affections as he meant to obtain them; and he soon perceived that, if seducing her was not hopeless, it could only be by means of winning her attachment, and by the bad principles he could not but suspect were only dormant in her bosom. "I can win her hardly by her vanity," thought he, "and still less by her avarice, for she has none."

Slowly her admirer became impressed with the virtue of Violet Woodville's character, and her good conduct was undoubted.

Lord Stanmore was now really unhappy: he could not think of

marrying her, yet he was very much in love. He was twenty-two, and his own master. He would not fly from the object of his passion; there was always a latent trust in his breast, that example and great temptation might prove foes to Violet, and friends to him. He was encouraged also by thinking that he had made some impression on a heart as yet untried—he, at least, hoped so.

It was certain that Violet was flattered by the respectful preference of her admirer—doubly respectful Lord Stanmore made it appear, because he was well aware that it was the most profound, as well as the most delicate flattery he could offer to one in her situation.

Her parents, and even M. Dupas, already dreamt of her as the bride of the rich young peer. Violet dreamt no such dream; but she did not the less encourage, after a gentle fashion, Lord Stanmore's admiration. He was good-looking, and a charming person—besides, he was her first love.

He speedily made acquaintance with all the prima donnas and ballerinas, through whose means he found he could share the society of Violet. At concerts and practisings, at rehearsals, at suppers, and réunions after the ballet; at the house of one or other of the operatic corps, he found the opportunities he sought, and was most assiduous in availing himself of them. It was always something to be making love, and even if nothing more came of it, he felt a sort of malicious pleasure in the hope that he might make himself regretted.

It was chiefly for the sake of Violet Woodville that Lord Stanmore proposed the Greenwich water-party; and he gave her *carte blanche* to ask all her friends, whilst he invited a number of men to add to their number. They were all to meet at Whitehall, and go down to Greenwich by water. Violet was naturally delighted at the pleasant day she expected to pass, and much pleased also by the manner in which Lord Stanmore made her the queen of the fête.

Violet Woodville went to see Emily as she requested, and gladly availed herself of her permission to ask her friends, by hoping Emily and her mother would be among them.

“O, I did not know, Violet, that this party was all for you!

Mr. Harcourt has asked me already," said Emily, at little piqued at finding she was not the first personage on this occasion. "But tell me, is it true that Lord Stanmore is very much in love? How do you manage him, Violet?—do you think he is at all a sort of man to marry you? Has he any mother, or any tiresome old guardian to meddle with what they have no business?"

"I do not know," answered Violet, colouring; "but as for marrying me, I am not so ambitious; Lord Stanmore's relations would hate me, if he did marry me, and I could not bear to be despised by any one."

"What great nonsense is that you are talking, child! why I could fancy you were come out of a wood all at once."

"Oh, you know, Emily, people look upon things differently. After all, it would be very wrong for a person like Lord Stanmore to marry me, who am not his equal in any way."

Miss Norris burst into a loud laugh.

"Heaven help your understanding! If I did not know you better, I should think you were the greatest fool alive. Who has put these crotchets into your head?"

"Not a being, believe me, but we may all make our own reflections."

"You had better make no more such as these; in our condition of life that sort of thing will not do at all. I never heard Lord Stanmore was a saint,—is it to please him you have learnt so much wisdom?"

"Come, don't laugh too much at me, Emily. You know there is truth in what I have said, at all events."

"I dare say; you may tell me as much of the Proverbs of King Solomon, but I am not going to quote them, for all that. Well, I will talk no more nonsense,—but tell me, what do you hear about me and Harcourt?—what is said about it, do you hear?—and is it thought he will propose for me?"

"Indeed, Emily, people are very ill-natured in what they say of you sometimes, and I wish Mr. Harcourt would propose to you, as you desire it so much, and then nothing more could be said."

"What do they say of me? I suppose it is that little spiteful Céleste, who never has forgiven me for taking Harcourt away from her; what does she say of me, Violet?"

"Oh, it is not little Céleste only, but other people; they declare he never will marry you, and that you must know it."

"Well I think differently,—and if Mr. Harcourt does propose, I own I shall glory in it, on account of that impertinent Céleste. She is so jealous, there is nothing she will not say of me. Pray, dear Violet, is she asked to be of the party to Greenwich?"

"I fear so, but you need not care for that."

"Oh dear no, I shall so like it! Harcourt will treat her with the utmost contempt, and, after her behaviour to me, I shall certainly not be sorry for her mortification. And then, Violet, if I do marry Mr. Harcourt," continued Emily in exuberant gaiety,—  
"how I shall like to have you constantly with me, and what amusement we shall have! You will always be my best friend, and Mr. Harcourt likes you already, and I am sure he will be so kind afterwards; and then he is the most generous person I know, and will give me every thing in the world I desire. How curious it will be for us to go to the opera together in our own box, will it not? And there I shall see Céleste all that way off,—ha, ha, ha!—dancing as she always does, with one foot more turned in than the other, and seeing me where she cannot get at me with all her ill-nature—how nice it will be for us to go in that way together!"

"Dearest Emily, you are very kind to think of me so; I do wish it was all settled with Mr. Harcourt; but you have never told me if you have heard any more of M. Larray; I am afraid he thought you behaved unkindly to him."

Emily Norris made no reply, but her expression changed.

"He is gone to Paris, is he not?"

"Do not name him now," exclaimed Emily, bursting into a violent fit of tears, and evincing grief as violent as her gaiety had been the very instant previous: and leaning on the table, she hid her face with her hands.

"Good heavens! do you care so much for him?" said Violet Woodville in astonishment.

"Indeed I do—he is the only person in the whole world I ever really preferred,—and—perhaps I shall never see him again."

"Then why, Emily, have you behaved to him in the way you have? you knew him to be devoted to you."

"Ah ! if I could recall the past, it should all be different. I thought if I could only marry Mr. Harcourt, that was every thing, and that I should be a lady, and then that odious Céleste could affront me no more. I was not always in the same mind. There were times that I would sooner have been Henri's wife than the King of England's ; but then we quarrelled, and he was jealous ; and mamma too, the moment she thought it possible Mr. Harcourt would marry me, never talked of any thing else ; and of Henri being poor, and of how rich I should be, and that was the great thing. And I could not help liking to flirt with Mr. Harcourt, because of that French girl, who has always been interfering with me all my life ; and then I quarrelled dreadfully with Mr. Larray, because he said he heard that Mr. Harcourt would not marry me and that I should lose my character, and he threatened to give me up for ever if I would not promise not to see Mr. Harcourt any more ; and I was very angry, and declared that all should be at an end then with Henri, for, that since he said this, I would not ever marry him, and that I would not be governed by any body.

"I was certainly very angry. I think I told Henri I wondered how he could expect that I should not prefer Mr. Harcourt to him, and that I had a right to do as well for myself as I could. —I do not know how it was, he was in a passion with me at first, but at last he softened entirely ; and, when I least thought of his doing so, he held out his hand and took mine, and said, "Let us part friends,—dear Emily, may God bless you !—I have loved you very much—I will not ask you ever to think of me again, but, for your own sake, have prudence ;"—and before I had time to answer, he left me, and next day went to Paris.

"This was the first idea I had of his leaving England, except on that one evening at our house when he bade me a sort of farewell through you ; but we had been friends after that, and I never thought he was serious in meaning to go abroad.

"So now it is all over, and I shall never"—Tears choked her utterance, and Emily gave way to a burst of grief she never reckoned upon undergoing, or her own selfishness would have saved her from the infliction.



## CHAPTER IV.

“ Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows,  
As proudly sailing o’er the azure realm,  
In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes,  
Youth at the prow, and Pleasure at the helm.”

“ MAMMA, it is such a lovely day ! ” exclaimed Violet Woodville, her face radiant with pleasure : how delightful ! — nothing could be more perfect ! ”

It was the day fixed for the water-party to Greenwich ; exquisite in truth it was, — just one of those days which we *can* have, even in this country, — just such a day as it is worth while to exist in, and to possess no other blessing.

Should the reader be capable of appreciating the actual charm there is in a very fine day, he will understand the force of Violet Woodville’s exclamation of “ How delightful ! ” and when, added to the weather, we can combine the gayest spirits and the most smiling joy of a young mind, — confess with me, my reader, say what we may, there are some heavenly hours in this world of ours, and that sometimes it is worth while to have been born, and to have incurred the chance of all the weal or woe that may fall to the lot of man.



It was about one o'clock ; the Woodvilles were ready to set forth. It had been agreed that the whole party should meet at Whitehall-stairs, and proceed thence in boats to Greenwich ; the Woodvilles and the Norrises were going together. At this moment a note was brought to Mr. Woodville, from Lord Stanmore.

" This is most provoking, " said he, handing the note to Mrs. Woodville. " Indeed it is, " replied that lady with an expression of consternation. " Indeed it is ; so Violet's new, beautiful pink hat goes for nothing, and she might as well not have had a new one ! "

" Nay, indeed, that I don't see at all ; little Violet ought to have all the hats in the kingdom, such a good, pretty little daughter as she is to me ; " and the fond father kissed his child with proud affection.

" Oh, I did not mean that Violet should not have as many new bonnets as she wants, only that beautiful pink one she does look so well in, and it cost a great deal ; but as I knew she was to see Lord Stanmore, on that account I would make her have it, wasn't it, Violet ? "

" Dear father, all this time you have not told me what the note contains ; never mind my bonnet, mamma, but tell me that. "

The note certainly communicated disagreeable intelligence. It was from Lord Stanmore, to say he had that instant received a bad account of his mother's health ; she had sent for two physicians, and he was led to fear there was danger. He was consequently, instantly going down to Brighton, where Lady Stanmore was staying. He desired, however, that the party might proceed without him. All the arrangements were made for it, and he had requested a friend to take his place on the occasion. Lord Stanmore's note concluded with expressing great regret at losing so much pleasure as he had anticipated in sharing the society of the Woodvilles, and sorrow for the cause of his deprivation.

Violet looked rather blank on finishing this note. A great part of her happiness vanished. She went to the window and began to think the day was not so fine as before. She mused for some minutes, and then, turning round, inquired in an absent manner what was to be done now about going.

"Oh, we go, of course, all the same," replied Mrs. Woodville, who very much liked what she called a pleasure party; "don't you see Lord Stanmore, in a very thoughtful manner, particularly requests that we should upon no account give up going, stating that he has got a friend to take his place. What's his name. Mr. Woodville? Does Lord Stanmore mention the name of the friend who is to preside in his place to-day? Give me the note. No—a friend, — no, there's no name, — that's a pity. I wonder Lord Stanmore did not mention his friend's name,—it's always as well to know who's who."

"You are sure he is a gentleman, can't that content you, Mrs. Woodville? What does it signify what his name is?" said Mr. Woodville.

"Oh, of course I suppose he is a gentleman, but still it is as well to know what people are besides."

"Well, for my part, I don't see what more there is to know besides."

"No, you never do know what you ought. Well, here's the glass coach. I suppose you gave a guinea for it for the day as usual, Charles, eh? It is a very neat one, I declare,—just as good as if we had our own carriage."

"Yes, I desired to have a nice one this time. Now get in, or we shall be too late; you know we are to call for the Norrises."

When the Woodvilles and the Norrises reached Whitehall Yard they were late, at least it appeared so from the previous arrival of two other vehicles, one being green, the other a deep yellow.

Out of the windows of these several equipages protruded some fair faces, but I do not know whether the eminently Parisian hats that waved on the top of these faces were not, in some instances, fairer still.

Impatience was strongly exhibited on the most coquettish countenance; and two or three cabs were waiting in the court, while their owners, in the very whitest gloves, were alternately walking about, admiring the French polish on their own boots, or stopping to pacify the anxious sylphs of the glass coaches.

The Woodville party was clearly the cause of all this restlessness, and their arrival was hailed accordingly. Then began the

letting down of steps, and the gentlemen's little cab boys touching their hats, and endeavouring to get noticed and obtain their orders, so as not to have to wait all day, and perhaps all night too, in Whitehall Yard for their masters, by whom their wretched little existences, and that of their poor cab horses, were being equally forgotten.

Then there was the shawling of the ladies. They were all of them good-looking, or approaching to it, which some women contrive to make about the same thing.

One there was smarter, and still more *aux petits soins* with herself than the rest of her companions. She was really pretty, and had taken every care to make the most of that advantage.

"*Mon cachemire—mille pardons,—mais c'est égal, Milor,—ne vous dérangez pas, Milor,—mais c'est fait, je vous assure,* — and, on this assurance, the *Milor*, of course, redoubled his attention towards draping the folds of an exquisite *cachemire des Indes* on the shoulders of the lady in question.

"There's Céleste," whispered Emily Norris to Violet, as she availed herself of Mr. Harcourt's assistance to walk down to the stairs.

"*Ah, mais voilà ma chère Miss Norris, — mais quelle jolie robe elle porte! Il faut absolument que je lui dise un tout petit mot,*" cried the owner of the cachemire, as she advanced towards Emily, leaning on the arm of her *Milor*.

"*Chère Miss Norris, I must tell you, you are charming to-day. I have to féliciter you, have I not? Congratulate you call it. And you, too, Mr. Harcourt. Well, you will live very happily together, I do not but believe you will. Drôle de chose que le mariage! c'est une liaison pour la vie! mais tous les deux vous êtes faits pour cela, n'est-ce pas? et quand est-ce que ce sera, ma très chère?*"

The last words were conveyed in a loud whisper. Emily Norris endeavoured to look as if she did not understand; and, with as much coolness as she could assume, she replied:—"I do not know to what you allude, Madlle. Céleste, but I am so sorry for the ungrateful reception you met with in the ballet on Saturday. Every body has told me of it, and I cannot tell you how it distressed me for your sake."

*"Eh, mais ne vous donnez pas cette peine, mon ange de bonté. Mais c'est que j'ai fait mal exprès pour m'excuser de ce rôle qui m'ennuie à la mort ! Mais dites donc, —vous me prierez à vos nocces, j'espère ? Ah, voilà Milor qui m'attend toujours ; au revoir, cher enfant ;"* and the malicious Céleste skipped off, happily conscious of having said the most disagreeable things she could, if not to Emily, at least, to her lover, who was out of temper accordingly, for Mr. Harcourt never could bear to be annoyed, —it is very disagreeable.

Violet was upon her father's arm, still a little distressed at the unavoidable defection of Lord Stanmore.

Laughing and talking, the whole party reached the boats. In these, two or three gentlemen were already occupied in preparing for the reception of the ladies, and one of them now jumped forward, and said something to Mr. Harcourt about introducing him, Mr. Harcourt obeyed by presenting this gentleman to Mr. Woodville and his daughter, and in him Violet at once recognised Mr. d'Arcy, whom she had never beheld since the night when she met him at Mrs. Norris's.

The impression he had then produced had almost worn away.

Mr. d'Arcy said he was desired to fulfill all the duties of his absent friend, Lord Stanmore, on this occasion, and asked, with an air of deference, to conduct Miss Woodville to the boat.

As he spoke, D'Arcy gazed in admiration on the most beautiful face he thought he had ever beheld.

At length everything was arranged, and Mr. Woodville, and Violet, Emily Norris, and Mr. Harcourt (who was still writhing under the infliction of Madlle. Céleste), that young lady, herself and her *Milor*, were all stowed in the first boat, but ere it shoved off D'Arcy discovered that there was no remaining place for him.

"D'Arcy," exclaimed Lord William C——, "what are you looking ? There's plenty of room for you in the other boats."

"So I see, but this is the one I mean to go in ; who will move?"

"Why you don't think we shall?"

"Indeed I do, my dear William,—one of you must. I am particularly desired to see that Miss Woodville is taken care of, and I cannot think of going in one of the other boats when she is in this," and, stepping forwards, Mr. d'Arcy whispered something

in Lord William's ear which had the effect of making him propose to his companion, *i. e.* to Céleste, to find places elsewhere.

Now, Madlle. Céleste had already practised some manœuvring to be where she was, and to be ousted thus she thought unbearable, and this opinion she expressed to Lord William.

"Madlle. does not like moving, D'Arcy; she made a point of being in this boat;" and he added, confidentially, "see if you can get her out yourself, it's all one to me, but I mustn't affront her, because I am making love to her, and I have so many affairs just now on hand, I can't afford losing time to make it up if I quarrel with her."

With an air of soft benignity D'Arcy proffered his hand to Céleste, and, on obtaining hers, gave it a most hardy gripe, which acted the part of a lever to the Frenchwoman, whether she would or not; but he accompanied the action with a smile and a look he meant for her alone, and one that he would sooner have resigned all chance of the place he aimed at possessing than Violet Woodville should have noticed. It thoroughly overcame poor Céleste, who went away with a better grace than she threatened to do at first.

To make one more, instead of the two who were gone, a Madame N—— was ushered into the vacant place, who, not having a cavalier, said she did not want one, and was taken at her word.

D'Arcy was quickly by the side of violet; and at the same instant a waterman called out to Mr. Woodville, to leave his daughter, in order to trim the boat by sitting on the opposite side.

D'Arcy, in an easy manner, lamented Lord Stanmore's absence, and did not scruple to express the reason, which would, he said, make the deprivation be doubly felt by his friend.

Violet replied with embarrassment. The conversation turned on other subjects: she found Mr. d'Arcy an easier person to converse with than she expected, and in spite of the timidity which she involuntarily felt, whenever the recollection of his conversation with Mr. Harcourt crossed her mind, still his agreeableness won upon her.

His manner, too, she found different from what she had considered it on that occasion. There was none of the superciliousness she had disliked; and when by accident she saw his expres-

sion, Violet only beheld the most speaking countenance, and not a feature, as she thought, that was not lighted with philanthropic benevolence.

Violet Woodville was fairly puzzled; she wondered how she could ever have thought ill-naturedly of him.

"Do you know, Miss Woodville," said D'Arcy, "I saw you at the Opera, for the first time, on Tuesday. I am only just returned to town. I have a great deal to thank you for; I never knew in my life, before, how exquisite an enjoyment it is to admire with such intensity!

"I am very glad to hear the ballet pleased you;—indeed, I think the scenery is beautiful," answered Violet with shyness.

"Oh, I am not thinking of the scenery," and D'Arcy smiled archly in her face. "I do not remember it even, I only thought of seeing my beau ideal of a Venus so unexpectedly embodied, as I saw it then,—as I see it now! But you are tired of hearing you are handsome, and, young as you are, you find the theme is hackneyed. Do not hate me if I could not fail to worship, and to tell you so, as all those that ever beheld you fain would."

"No, Mr. d'Arcy, I am not so used to compliments as all that," said Violet, *naïvement*; "but only I like people not to exaggerate so much to me, because I think they must suppose how vain I am, and that, you know, is not flattering at all."

"Flattery," muttered D'Arcy, half to himself, "no one ever flattered you."

"Are you fond of the Opera, Mr. d'Arcy?"

"Yes, very; I like it because, in the first place, I am really fond of music: and, whether or no, I frequent it on principle."

"But why on principle?"

"We become so vile and hardened occasionally, I think it is an immense thing to get one's old romance brushed up—revived a little at intervals, and nothing does that so effectually as a good opera. These touchings up do the basest hearts an infinite good. Ah! I suppose I talk nonsense to you, who can know nothing of the world,—may you long remain blest with ignorance: you ought, for, if I ever read a countenance, yours is the picture of a charming mind. I could look at you for ever, and I could not

imagine you possessed one fault! Tell me, have you one in the world?"

"Oh, yes," answered Violet, laughing, "so many; but I shall not tell them."

"Well, I think you would if I were to press you very much."

"What makes you think so?"

"You have an air of candour that bids defiance to concealment of any kind."

"Altogether, you have a better opinion of me than I deserve; I am not in the least better than other people, I assure you."

"For instance," said D'Arcy, "not better than any one of us in this boat? I confess," he continued, "I am curious to comprehend this standard of your own perfection. To begin with that formal Madame N——, who has been the Emilia, pocket-handkerchief woman in *Otello* for the last three seasons, to the best of my recollection,—an excellent woman, for what I know, but would you exchange all the good you are sure of in yourself, for the qualities you may suppose her to possess?"

"No, no!"

"Well, there's Miss—Miss Norris, what do you think of her?" D'Arcy spoke with an enquiring eye. Violet reddened, for she was reminded of the scarcely less than contempt with which she had before heard D'Arcy speak of Emily Norris.

"Miss Norris is a great friend of mine," she answered, almost deprecatingly.

"Ah!" exclaimed D'Arcy. Violet raised her eyes to his. They were fixed upon her with earnest penetration, while a smile played round the corners of a very handsome mouth. Then those eyes, as they encountered Violet Woodville's, softened; and timidly Violet turned her head away. But, in her heart, she felt pleased; and the soft voice, in which it was necessary D'Arcy's remarks should be made, was not without its effect on her susceptibility, whilst it prevented their being heard by their companions.

D'Arcy had very handsome eyes, and the most expressive I ever saw; they were not continually handsome, but they had some latent charm: it existed, but was not always evident; and at times it slept entirely beneath that look of utter indifference which had been so much remarked by Violet when she first met him.

"There's Mr. Woodville, but we will pass him over: he is your father, and that at once endears him in my mind."

"Oh, yes; if you knew my father, he is better than anybody in the world; I wish I was but half as good as he is."

"I believe you.—Now for Mr. Harcourt: what say you for his excellencies of character?"

"I see him almost for the first time."

"Then there remains only myself to discuss. Would you, at a venture, exchange all the good feelings you must be conscious of for mine?"

"But, again—I know you so little, Mr. d'Arcy, yet I dare say you are a very good person."

The innocent gentleness with which this was spoken would have touched a tiger's heart: D'Arcy did not smile; he could not.

"D'Arcy," exclaimed Mr. Harcourt, who found he had exhausted his sentimentalities with Emily: "D'Arcy, did you ever see a girl like that little Céleste? By Jove! what could she want here?"

"The pleasure of sitting opposite Miss Norris and yourself, I presume; undeniably no small pleasure," said D'Arcy, bowing to Emily.

But the manner was changed. In those few words Violet could hardly recognise the person she had just conversed with. His look, too! It was that look and that tone that Violet could not bear.

"Is Madlle. Céleste a friend of yours, Miss Woodville?" asked Mr. Harcourt.

"No; I hardly know her."

"No!" said Woodville: "I am not very fond of Madlle. Céleste, and I like to choose nice friends for my good little daughter there. You must excuse my being very fond of her. She is my only child, and the best that ever lived, I am sure. But I have no business to be saying so here; I do not know what made me so silly," continued the father, half modestly, half ashamed of his parental pride. D'Arcy looked at Woodville's honest countenance, and he wondered inwardly.

Before dinner the whole party went sight-seeing, as is usual, I believe. D'Arcy took care not to relinquish the charge of Violet,



and she was too happy to wish for any change. So off they all went to see the Hospital, as most of the party had done a hundred times before; but which was no reason for their not doing it again now.

Many a joyous party has trod the courts of Greenwich Hospital—many; and if those old stones could speak, what tales of love they could reveal! Vows spoken there, and long forgotten. There, too, many a tear has fallen, and many a ringing laugh has sounded; and oblivion, and the dust of the dead are all that remain of eventful hours—the joy or the misery of a human life! But of these things there is no record; for the heart has none.

E'en such is time, which takes in trust  
 Our youth, our joys, and all we have,  
 And pays us nought save age and dust;  
 Which, in the dark and silent grave,  
 When we have wandered all our ways,  
 Shuts up the story of our days.

SIR W. RALEIGH.

Before Emily quitted Mr. Harcourt's arm, on arriving at the "Ship," where they were to dine, Mrs. Norris approached, and said to Emily, in a sort of genteel voice, which she used on particular occasions—"Dearest, I fear I spoilt half your happiness to-day, by not being able to be with you on the water. Emily cannot bear to be chaperoned by anybody but myself, Mr. Harcourt; she is quite childish about that. But you saw, love, there really was no room for me; and the Woodvilles are such good people, and they were in the boat!"

"Oh, thank you, Mamma; I did regret your not being with me; but I knew you could not help it," answered Miss Norris.

"Mamma," said Emily, while adjusting her hair before dinner, "Mamma, I beg you will get anywhere but near me at dinner—above all, do not sit opposite to me. It is very easy for you, if you try, to get a seat a long way from me down the table, on the same side—only a long way from me, mind that!"

"Very well," said Mrs. Norris, "and pray don't let your temper get the better of you, so as to have any of your snapping at

Madlle. Céleste. She will do you harm yet if you are not careful; for my part I shall be particularly civil to her."

"Harcourt," said D'Arcy, the first opportunity he found, "what is this new girl?"

"What—which?"

"That little Woodville, to be sure!"

"Miss Woodville?"

"Oh, how punctilious you are become! Upon my word, Harcourt, the society you keep improves you amazingly. Miss Woodville, then," continued D'Arcy, with an emphasis on the *Miss*.

"Why, she is a very nice girl, I believe, and it is no use your looking after her."

"Indeed! *en attendant*, I shall like to know something of her."

"Well, I tell you, she is a very nice person."

"Be more explicit, pray: how do you know anything about her?"

"She happens to be a particular friend of Miss Emily Norris, and gets advice from her; and Emily possesses such high principles, that I have an opinion of anybody who is her friend," said Mr. Harcourt, slowly and pompously.

"The devil you have!" exclaimed D'Arcy, bursting into laughter; "well, I don't despair, notwithstanding. Thank you, you have told me a great deal."

The dinner was excellent, and gaiety was the order of the day. The champagne was declared to be the best ever tasted, and, on that account, it was tasted very often. All the ladies were in good humour. Milor and Céleste became great friends, and he hoped he should not have to waste as much time in making love to the lady as he at first feared.

Emily and Mr. Harcourt went on remarkably well, for two people who, after all, were playing at cross purposes.

Mrs. Norris with her lynx eyes saw them, and everybody else, though she obeyed Emily's injunction, and did not sit too near her. Mrs. Norris was one of those who particularly approved of the champagne, and thought it almost as good as any lover, and wondered she had not thought so all her life. So she drank it; and went on looking benignly at all the world, but keeping her-

self as decorous as she possibly could, so as not to be a reproach to the rest; for Mrs. Norris was quite of opinion with the man in 'Molière's Misanthrope':—

A force de sagesse, on peut être blâmable,  
La parfaite raison fuit toute extrémité,  
Et veut que l'on soit sage avec sobriété.

\* \* \* \* \*

Et c'est une folie à nulle autre seconde,  
De vouloir se mêler de corriger le monde."

After dinner D'Arcy was extremely civil to Mr. Woodville, and talked a great deal about the orchestra at the King's Theatre; and blamed the manager much for being stingy. He then praised Violet exceedingly, and, with great frankness, extolled her dancing, and told Woodville numerous things that he (D'Arcy) had heard in eulogium upon her.

In the evening, walking in the park was proposed, and acceded to by all.

D'Arcy found a moment to express his anxiety about Mrs. Woodville's shawl being the right one, and to beg she would allow him to introduce a cousin of his, Lord Toppington, who was among their number; and he brought up a raw boy of sixteen, and presented him, saying, "The young gentleman was most anxious for the honour of making Mrs. Woodville's acquaintance." He next whispered in his ear—"There, Arthur, that's a great thing I have done for you, you may be much obliged to me,—offer your arm directly, and don't stand staring like a fool."

Then D'Arcy glided back to Violet, who was attending to some young men, and, at the same time, forced to listen to the honied words of little Céleste, who was fond of new acquaintances, and liked teaching "the young idea how to shoot." She was rather a clever gipsy, that Mademoiselle Céleste.

A walk by moonlight is a very pleasant thing with a lover, and a lover, too, just beginning to bud into one. A budding lover is a much pleasanter thing than a full-blown one, very often; there is so much trouble attendant upon the latter sort.

D'Arcy said nothing positive to Miss Woodville about his being

in love with her; he was as discreet on that head as Mrs. Norris herself could have desired, and Violet grew more and more pleased with him. He pointed out the moon and the stars to her, but in a new way, it seemed to Violet; so that it was really the same thing to her as if she had never seen them before.

It may be worth remarking, that Violet and D'Arcy, out of some twenty people who composed the party, were the only ones who made an observation on the beauties of Nature. Céleste and *Milior* thought of nothing of the sort; and if Céleste had shown a disposition that way, Lord William never could have found time to reply to such a singular little *caprice d'esprit*.

Emily and Mr. Harcourt sauntered on together. The latter was not *aimable*. He declared he could not understand Miss Norris's behaviour : her unkindness was extraordinary. Was he not devoted to her?—had she a desire it was not his to fulfil? Was he not her slave? Had she ever had reason to doubt his affection? Had he not forsaken every other lady for her sake?—and yet, what was the return he met with? He could no longer doubt Miss Norris had deceived him; her affections were already engaged; he was but the victim of her coquetry, and was the most miserable of men!

That last assurance, as a lover, he was, of course, bound to add, whether it were true or not. All these sentences sounded very euphoniously; but what of that—for not one of them hinted at a proposal—and Emily still thought that might be obtained, finally;—if not—why—then—but Mrs. Norris was so discreet a woman, that it is not fair to surmise on the future actions of any one under her guidance.

As for Mrs. Woodville, and her boy Toppington, they trotted on together; she, poor woman, trying to make such innocent conversation as appeared the best suited to him, as she conceived; and he, more shy than he ever was in his life before, and a thousand times more in awe of a lady who acted at Covent Garden, than even of his stiff great grandmother, the Duchess of Mightiness, when she sent to give him a lecture, or to stop his allowance. He thought it, however, very kind of his cousin D'Arcy to have got him to this water party, and still more kind to have introduced him to so distinguished a person as Mrs. Woodville.

"Remarkably pleasing young man, Mr. d'Arcy, I think; did not you, Mr. Woodville?" inquired Woodville's spouse, as they reached home in the glass coach.

"Yes, indeed; and he was very attentive to all of us, I thought; and he told me also that he admired Violet so very much, which showed him to be a sort of frank young man, without any double dealing about him, which is what I hate. I do not like it when young men come and talk to a girl, and are not for saying anything of it to her parents: I, who know the world well, always guess that means no good;" and upon the close of these pertinent observations, Mr. Woodville stepped upon his own threshold.

The next time Violet saw Mr. d'Arcy was while he was sitting in a side-box at the Opera; before she became aware of his presence, she thought only of the audience. *Now*, he alone was that audience. The judgment of the multitude, pending upon herself at that moment, was forgotten—contending feelings were hers. She hated so that D'Arcy, the despiser D'Arcy, should behold her one of the tribe for whom he had declared so much contempt. I at least will show him I deserve not his ill opinion, thought Violet; "Still I am an opera-dancer," she involuntarily exclaimed; and never, since its commencement, had Violet Woodville's dislike to her profession so forcibly recurred to her.

Two or three days afterwards D'Arcy called upon the Woodvilles: he had heard, he said, from Lord Stanmore. Lady Stanmore was not better, and his friend wrote in wretched spirits. He was exceedingly attached to his mother, and Mr. d'Arcy declared, from the account he received, he thought it a hopeless case; and he grieved over Lord Stanmore's affliction in consequence.

Violet was in the room during D'Arcy's visit, and she could not help feeling that his eyes were riveted upon her, when he mentioned Lord Stanmore. She was really sorry for her admirer's distress, and she said so without disguising it.

D'Arcy talked more of Lord Stanmore to her father and mother than he did to herself. During his visit M. Dupas came in; and while the family greetings were going on, D'Arcy contrived to approach Violet.

"Do you never walk, Miss Woodville?"

"Oh, yes; very often."

“ When?”

“ Very early; before breakfast, often.”

“ Where?”

“ In Kensington Gardens : we live so near; it is convenient.”

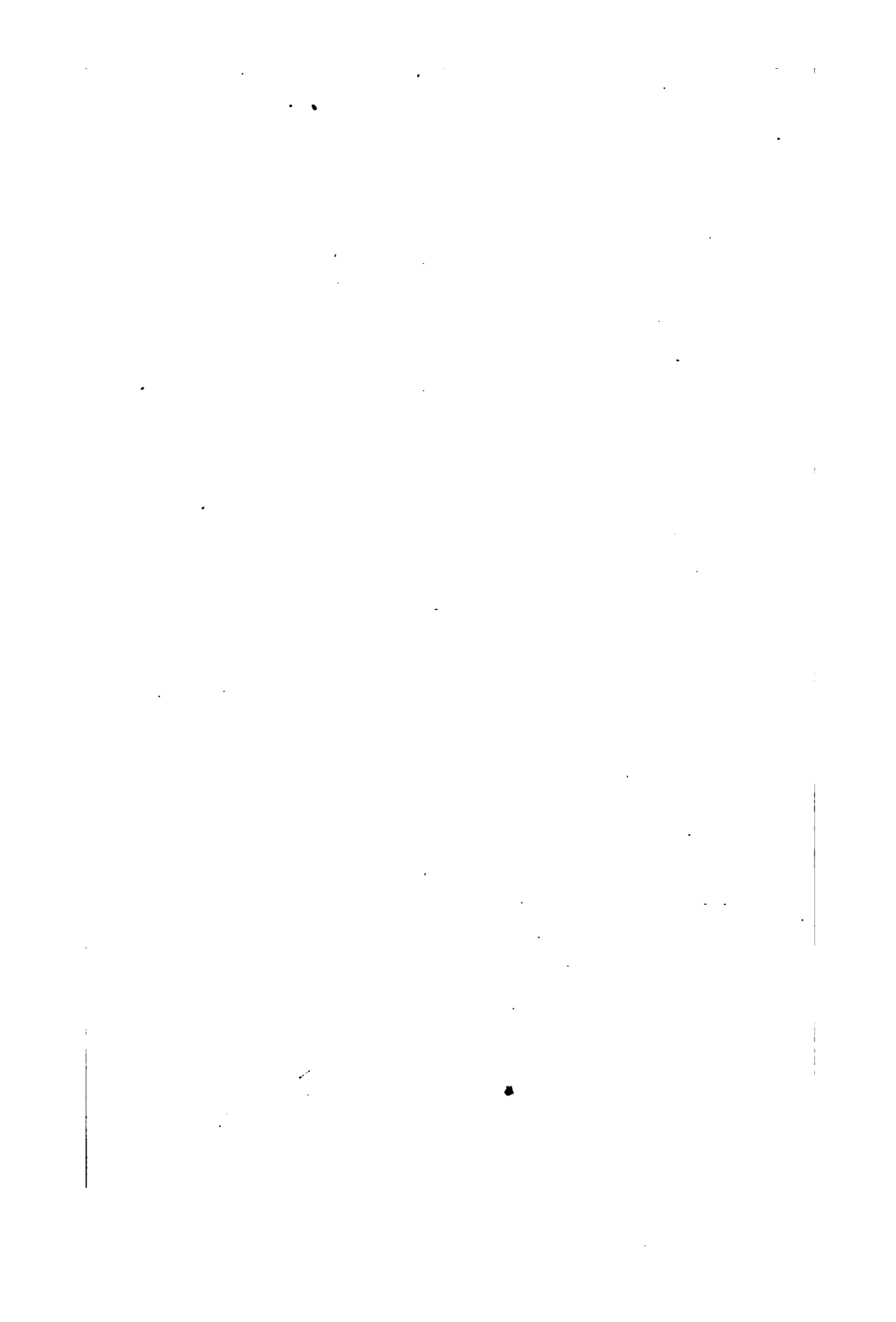
“ With Mrs. Woodville?”

“ No; Mamma is not up so early.”

D'Arcy longed to ask,—Alone, then? or With whom? but he did not quite dare; for he was aware that the drift of his questions was unperceived by Violet, and he feared that, had it been otherwise, he might give umbrage. Violet actually did not surmise the course of his inquiries. It is possible, without being a fool, to be quite unknowing in the ways of the world; and Violet was the most unsuspecting of human beings. Her simplicity of mind, as to all that was artful or designing, placed her almost in the position of a child who learns to read, but, from hating the pursuit, gains no improvement. Violet Woodville daily heard, and sometimes saw, instances of deception, and even of vice; but while she knew such things were, she did not dream of them in connexion with herself.

There are minds like this, beautiful only as they were created; and how sad it is to think that soon the contact of other minds shall tarnish the purity of such as these, and reduce them to their own level. Yet are we all alike destined for an ordeal; and if virtue falls into error, we are bound to doubt its true perfection. It was not made to pass as useless; and it has been said by one\* who was well read in the hearts of his fellow-creatures,—“ *La même faiblesse qui nous fait trouver des écueils au milieu du monde et de la cour, nous aurait fait une tentation de la retraite même. Nous portons partout avec nous la source de nos crimes et de nos malheurs, et ainsi il ne faut pas attendre nôtre sûreté des dehors de la situation.*”

\* Massillon.



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## CHAPTER V.

“ The game of life—how is it played—by whom—  
For what?—What fearful trickery  
To gain some wretched end : and, still more sad,  
How much of mental power, which ought to boast  
A nobler aim, employed for means the basest!  
'Tis brave to see two knaves engaged, each bent  
On duping his opponent ; but, alas !  
There are some nobler victims, some whose fate  
Might wring hot tears of blood from human hearts.”  
OLD PLAY.

“ CHARLES,” said Mrs. Woodville to her husband, “ I cannot help thinking Lord Stanmore gets Mr. d’Arcy to call here, that he may see us for him, as it were : you know that is so like a man in love. I fancy, too, somehow, Mr. d’Arcy knows we have guessed that ; for he is quite at his ease, and comes in to us in a way as if he thought we could only be glad to see him.”

“ And so we are,” replied Mr. Woodville ; “but I would rather see Lord Stanmore himself. I hope Violet is not thinking too much of him, poor little girl ! These fine gentlemen may go on for awhile ; but if anything comes to turn their attention, there’s



an end of them. Who knows what fine lady he may fall in love with any day, at all those balls and places that we have nothing to do with? Don't talk about him to little Violet, for fear she should get to think more of him than it is well she should."

"Not I! Really, Mr. Woodville, one would think sometimes you took me for a fool! I have not heard Violet name Lord Stanmore these three days!"

"I am sure he *was* in love with her, however; and he knew well enough, from what he saw of me, I was not the sort of person to let my daughter do anything that she should not do; and, with the education we have given her, I would have him to know she's fit to be the wife of any Lord. If he only knew the money we spent upon her! Perhaps he thinks she can only dance?"

"I do not know what he thinks; but I should like to have done with him, one way or other: there's a swarm of those young men every night after the poor girl, all making up their mind she will come to their turn. If it was not for our always looking after her, I do not know what they would not be saying to her."

"Oh," rejoined Mrs. Woodville, "I take care of that, or else M. Dupas does. I do wonder when we shall see Lord Stanmore, for the season will be over in three weeks, and, if his mother should die, why then he will go into black, and will not be going about for some time. Parents' mourning, though, is not worn so long as it used to be, is it, Charles?"

"I don't know,—but I don't see what difference it makes to us."

"Ah, well, I do though. There's a ring,—see, is it the Norrises?—no, it's Dupas.—no, it's Mr. d'Arcy."

Mr. d'Arcy had certainly familiarized the Woodvilles with his visits, without their ever having the appearance of being abrupt or uncalled for. During these visits he saw Violet, but not always. When he did not he never asked for her, but he stayed less time when she was not there. He was fond of music, and understood it, and sometimes he got Mr. Woodville to play to him upon the violoncello. Very often he brought new music with him, and he had always something to say about Lord Stanmore.

Violet was never engaged in the ballet, that she did not see D'Arcy in the box nearest to her; and there was no one whose applause was more frequent, or more loudly expressed. By degrees

she got accustomed to seeing him always at the Opera. She liked him more each time she met him, because each time she found something of her original misgiving about him diminished. She soon beheld only the pleasing side of his character.

Violet now seldom thought of Lord Stanmore : she had liked him, but D'Arcy interested her. Ah ! what a difference there is in the meaning of those two words ! Interest another in your favour, be it man or woman, and much may follow,—to please merely is to do nothing. And is it not true that there are some people who please, but who cannot interest ? There is a wide distinction between pleasing exceedingly, and interesting exceedingly,—either may happen, and neither in connexion.

About three weeks had elapsed since the Greenwich water-party, and one or two more of the same sort took place. D'Arcy made love, but not openly. He still left Violet in doubt. As yet he had not done anything decidedly declaring his sentiments, but he ascertained that he had no rival, and that was what he most desired. “*Les impressions sont d'autant plus dangereuses qu'elles sont insensibles.*” Few of us pause to analyse our feelings, and Violet was not one of those few. Our feelings are born, they grow, they inspire us vitally, and then, and not before, we wake to a knowledge of them. After all, though a great deal may be said about knowing ourselves intimately, and of the utility of such knowledge, I doubt if there be really any advantage in it.

The commencement, too, of all sentiments of love or friendship is so soothing. Distrust is disarmed, suspicion has its opiate ; and, if these first moments of illusion are to be destroyed, say ye, who can, what remains in lieu of them ? and of what avail is all the reasoning of philosophy if it deprive us of one little iota of human happiness ?

D'Arcy had not yet endeavoured to profit by the chance which he had discovered for himself, of meeting Violet in her morning walks. He had his reasons for this delay. He thought that Violet would conceive that she did not know him enough, not to be more surprised than he desired she should be at the interruption.

He had ascertained that a housekeeper, or old servant of the Woodvilles, was her duenna in these walks. The Woodvilles lived near Kensington, and Violet, who was not a strong person,

was advised to get the morning air in the gardens, and it suited particularly the domestic arrangements that these walks should be taken early.

"Pray, D'Arcy," said Mr. Harcourt, one night at Crockford's, "what have you been at lately?"

"I have been very much occupied. But I put the same question to you. You look very ill."

"And so I am,—horridly ill. I am so worried,—I am miserable."

"That's a pity. '*Il n'y a pas de plus grande folie que d'être malheureux.*' \* What's the matter?"

"I am in such a scrape with the Norrises,—Céleste has been blowing me to the devil. I had hysterics, and scenes, and faintings,—and I declare I don't know what to do."

"Cut, to be sure,—don't be a fool."

"Not if I thought Emily really liked me."

"Upon my soul, Harcourt, you are as weak as water," exclaimed D'Arcy.

"Ah, I don't believe you ever cared for a woman in your life," replied Harcourt, pettishly.

D'Arcy laughed out aloud.

"What! not for Mrs. O'Colly? and didn't I turn hair-dresser for the Italian girl? Didn't I ruin myself for Estelle? and didn't I go to Rome after a woman, who had been divorced, for the sake of two other men? Didn't I become a Methodist for the brewer's wife? and wouldn't I have sold myself to the Devil for——"

"Oh, I know you, D'Arcy. At all events, you don't understand my feelings."

"Well, but stay, I want to ask you,—a'n't you going to have a supper, or something of that kind, at the Norrises this week?"

"What do you ask for?"

"There's some one to be there I want to meet, and they haven't asked me,—it is a mistake, I suppose."

"I am not asked myself."

"Perhaps, then, you would like me to see if I can intercede

\* Du Deffand.

with the lovely Emily for you ; or is it that slippery crocodile, her mamma, who has turned you out of the house?"

" No, it's no use, " said Mr. Harcourt, shaking his head despondingly.

" Harcourt, " said D'Arcy, more seriously than D'Arcy often said anything, " as we are old friends, I should be half inclined to give you advice this time unasked for ; but I will not, because I believe I should be doing the most useless thing I ever did in my life. "

" Thank you, D'Arcy, I believe you are a good fellow. I am going to throw a couple of mains, " and Harcourt moved towards the hazard table, well pleased with the amenity with which he thought he had listened to D'Arcy's advice ; for it did not occur to him that, though he guessed its nature, that, nevertheless, he had not heard it.

Of his own accord D'Arcy went the next day to call on the Norrises. He found Mrs. Norris and Emily, but the latter was evidently failing in an attempted escape from the room as he entered it. Both mother and daughter looked discomfited. Mrs. Norris, however, soon recovered her usual placidity, and then said she was to have music the next evening, and hoped she should see Mr. d'Arcy, if he had nothing better to engage him.

This was all D'Arcy wanted, but he stayed a few minutes making conversation. Emily had hardly once spoken. D'Arcy talked of Harcourt, and said he was out of spirits ; Emily still did not revive. At last D'Arcy observed there were tears in her eyes, tears, too, that she wished to conceal, and that she looked cross as well as unhappy, which made D'Arcy sure it was not feigned grief.

A touch of curiosity led him to observe her more closely. She thinks Harcourt is off, I suppose, thought D'Arcy ; and, perhaps, this sleek Jezabel, her mother, has been scolding her for it.

Mrs. Norris went on talking in her smooth, agreeable, proper way, and suddenly, as if she could no longer control her feelings, Emily moved to the window. D'Arcy then rose to go, but at that minute Madame N—— was announced, to whom, on her entrance, Mrs. Norris manifested great civility. Mrs. Norris had lately struck up an intimacy with Madame N——. She said she was delighted to cultivate so estimable a person as every body knew Madame to

be. It was everybody knowing it, made Madame N—— so very estimable in Mrs. Norris's estimation.

During the greetings and seatings between the new comer and Mrs. Norris, D'Arcy approached the window, where Emily was still standing. She certainly looked very unhappy, and turned away, to hide her countenance from D'Arcy.

"Miss Norris," said D'Arcy softly, "is there any way in which I can serve you?"

Emily opened wide her tearful eyes. She had grown afraid of D'Arcy, and had guessed his covert dislike, though she never could feel sure of it, because it was not easy to feel sure of anything about D'Arcy. If he sneered in one breath, he complimented her in the next; he never was *brusque*; he often was very civil. Emily had not made him out, but she was simply getting to dislike him for that very reason. D'Arcy's present question was uttered in a different tone from what she had ever heard D'Arcy speak with before; at first she hardly understood him. He added—"If I can, I shall be most happy."

An expression of intelligence now lighted Emily's face. Her mother's back was turned towards her at this moment,—Mrs. Norris was still intent on her new visiter. Emily glanced her eye at these two persons, then, with great haste, drew a letter from her bosom, and crushed it almost into D'Arcy's hand; he put it into his pocket, and then appeared to be only busy with his handkerchief.

"For Harcourt?" he said, inquiringly, and under-voiced.

"No, no,—not for him, you will see,—in the post,—you will see,—thank you for ever!"

D'Arcy thought he never saw Emily Norris look handsomer than she did at that moment, when she cast a look of evident gratitude towards himself.

Just as Mrs. Norris's little blue, or little red, or little green page (I forget which) was shutting the door upon D'Arcy, and the latter was putting his hand upon Emily's letter, in order to examine the superscription, he was arrested by the sudden appearance of Lord William B——. His manner was eager, as he joined D'Arcy, hastily.

"Oh, I was just going to you, D'Arcy,—I wanted to find you," exclaimed Lord William, in a graver voice than usual.

"Very well, then we will walk on together,"

"D'Arcy," continued Lord William, "I am in a scrape; I shall have to fight, and I want you to be my second."

"Of course, my dear fellow; but I am sorry to hear this,—what is it?"

"It's that cursed little Céleste who is at the bottom of it. She has been telling lies, and that, and her infernal coquetry have played the devil."

"Ah; I thought she looked mischievous; you should always examine the bréed well before you have anything to do with these ladies. But how is it, William?"

"It seems, when I took to her, she belonged to Spottington. I thought her free,—I never asked her,—how should such a thing come into my head? I thought she had a great deal of cash for one who was in the way of getting her living honestly; for I was fool enough to be taken in, and thought she cared for me, and believed her when she said she allowed no other man to make love to her; and I knew she floored Dick Wentworth. Well, one day who should I get a challenge from but Spottington, saying, he was only just returned to town, or he should have asked me sooner to give him satisfaction for my ungentlemanlike conduct. I thought the man was mad! I called at his house to try and see him,—he was out. Then I wrote to him, asking him to say, at least, what he meant. Presently Bubble arrived, to tell me that he was Spottington's friend, and that he was desired by him to inform me, that I must be aware my usurping Madlle. Céleste's affections, at a time she was under the positive protection of Spottington, was a piece of treachery that Spottington could not forgive. The truth is, the whole affair might have been explained, and I would have done it myself with any other man than Spottington, but I hate him, and I have reason to suspect that this is but an excuse, after all, to call me out, for he and I have quarrelled before, only then he could not show his teeth."

"And so, for a fool and a coquette, your life must be staked?"

"Be it so,—we must take these chances, and I myself have been a fool. Well, you will be my second,—that's all I wanted you for."

D'Arcy and Lord William separated at the end of the Colonnade in Regent Street.

D'Arcy then remembered Miss Norris's letter, which Lord William's recital had caused him partly to forget. He searched for it in his pocket, and could not find it. Neither could he find a silk pocket-handkerchief, which had been in the same pocket. He was not long in concluding that a thief had deprived him of the one, and unavoidably of the other at the same time, for he recollected having taken out his handkerchief, when drawing out the letter to read the direction, at the moment he was joined by Lord William B——, and that, in the interruption, he re-deposited the two together. It was evident that, in abstracting the handkerchief, the letter had been lost.

D'Arcy was sorry for this accident, it looked like carelessness on his part, which made him regret having proffered his services; besides, he did not well know how, before the next evening, he could convey to Emily the knowledge that her wishes had not been obeyed. If she had not denied it, he would still have felt assured that the letter was for Harcourt. It was so unlucky, not having seen the direction,—it would have been some clue, as to knowing when Emily could expect an answer to her epistle. Without running the risk of Mrs. Norris's being informed, D'Arcy did not see how he could let Emily be made aware immediately of this misadventure; and Mrs. Norris, it was clear, was the last person she meant should know any thing about it. D'Arcy did not much think the pickpocket would forward the letter to its destination; it was not an impossibility, however. In the mean time, he came to the conclusion that nothing more could be done till the next night, at Mrs. Norrises.

He went to Tattersall's and met Harcourt.

"Harcourt," said d'Arcy, "after all, you never told me what occasioned this blow up of yours with the Norrises."

"Céleste wrote an anonymous letter to Mrs. Norris, taking away her character. It was found out, and traced to Céleste; and poor Mrs. Norris was furious, because, as she said, if it had been sent to any body else,—but it was a thing which had never happened to her before, and she never could forgive it. Had she deserved it, she declared, she should not have minded; but as it was, it was too bad. Poor woman! I never saw her in such a state of anger before. In addition to this, Céleste gave the whole

account of the gold chain I purchased for her a month ago, when we made friends for a day or two. She heard me say I had won a hundred pounds of String the black-leg, and, as she asked about it, I could not do less than buy her that chain with some of the money.—All this is her infernal spite against Emily.”

“And was it for this you were turned out of the Norris establishment?”

“Not entirely; but I had both women upon me at once: and, as I could not well deny the little transaction of the chain, Emily sulked; but her mother drew up, as if she was old Scarron's widow, and said she could not permit my continuing any longer my visits—that Emily's affections were engaged—her health gone; and, as it now appeared, her own character attacked, which was the most extraordinary and unheard of malice, and that she could not disguise from herself, that even the last horrible aspersion had arisen, in some measure, from her intimacy with one who was every way unworthy of the innocent confidence reposed in me by herself and her daughter. So now you have it. What could I do?”

“What did you do?”

“I left the house, crest-fallen, and have been ill ever since. I have called, and they don't admit me.”

“Then you will not be there to-morrow night?”

“Yes, for I shall write a note to Emily to say I must see her, which I must.”

“Then we shall meet there. I am going. I make love to neither mother nor daughter, and am in the odour of sanctity with both.”

How happy Violet Woodville felt all the day, and days before, at the prospect of meeting D'Arcy at the Norrises that evening. There is so much happiness in the certainty of meeting a beloved object! and to know that you are also the object of their wishes!

This certainty, which is soon acquired, is one of Love's young decrees, and its most pleasing one. There is the quiet pleasure, but not the agitation; the passion is still growing, like a rose-bud; there is the beautiful opening flower, but the thorns are yet unfelt, and you could think there are none.



Love in the soul, not bold and confident,  
 But, like Aurora, trembles into being;  
 And, with faint, flickering, and uncertain beams,  
 Gives notice to the awakening world within us  
 Of the full blazing orb that soon shall rise,  
 And kindle all its passions.—Then begin  
 Sorrow and joy : unutterable joy,  
 And rapturous sorrow !

NEALE.

Violet as yet knew nothing of the “ sorrow and joy ; unutterable joy, and rapturous sorrow ; ” but she felt exceedingly happy.

D’Arcy was one of the earliest comers to Mrs. Norris’s, but, for once, Violet was not quite his first object. He hastened towards Emily Norris, who was then unoccupied, and looking brighter than when he saw her the day previous.

D’Arcy at once told her of the ill-luck about her letter, and said he could only endeavour to atone for his carelessness by being doubly anxious to execute any further commands of hers.

“ I had not seen the address,” said D’Arcy, “ and if you had not told me to the contrary ( at least, if I remember right ), I should have thought a friend of mine would have been in greater despair than even myself at the loss of your letter.”

“ You did not see the address ? ”

“ No.” D’Arcy was too well bred to ask it then, but he would have liked to have done so.

Emily thought a moment ; and, colouring, said, with evident hesitation, “ Well, perhaps, as the letter was lost, it is as well..... —What I mean is, that I will not write another—and let it be forgotten altogether. I believe I was wrong.”

“ Certainly ; forgotten let it be, if you desire it,” said D’Arcy ; and he was moving away, when Emily gently called him by name —“ Mr. d’Arcy, I hope, though I have not expressed it, that you will believe how much obliged I shall ever feel to you for your kindness yesterday morning. I shall not forget it, and I did not expect it from you. I had a sort of consciousness you did not—much like me ; and I am the more grateful to you—I shall be so always.”

Emily Norris had a very melodious voice; and in saying these words it sounded more so than usual. There seemed a sincerity about her, too, which D'Arcy did not think she possessed; and he left her, liking her better, or disliking her less, than he had ever done before. "And, undoubtedly, she is very handsome," said he, inwardly, as he turned to look for Violet Woodville.

"It is three long days since I have seen you," said D'Arcy, addressing Miss Woodville.

"Yes, so it is," answered Violet, as if she too thought they were long days.

"And now that I do see you—if you knew how much pleasure it gives me!" exclaimed D'Arcy.

Not knowing what answer to make, Violet said nothing; but the embarrassment in her ingenuous countenance did not make it less beautiful; and so thought D'Arcy, as he contemplated her ere he again spoke.

"There is but one thing to mar my satisfaction—the uncertainty of when I shall again possess it. Of that you are heedless; and even your pity for my uncertainty is perhaps denied me?"

"Oh, I would give you all the pity in the world, if I did but know why it was to be given; that is, if I really knew it was for something that you might be pitied for, with good reason," answered Violet, with gaiety, but with some embarrassment.

"Perhaps," said D'Arcy, gravely, "I have a right to your pity, though it may not suit you to believe so."

"I never could pity *you*."

"Why?"

"I really hardly know how to say it; but I never could pity you, oh, never! You strike me as a person that never either pitied, or would pity."

"I must have appeared to you then as an uncommonly unamiable character?"

"No, not at all; but I have an idea you would so despise being pitied; and I cannot fancy your being very pitying or kind to others."

"Neither, upon the whole, am I; there you are right. But then it is that I care for so few people. I am often amused, but seldom interested."

"Often amused!" said Violet, opening her eyes wider; "that surprises me, because that is what you don't appear to be."

"And you have corrected me,—no, it is true I am not amused—hardly ever—I meant something else."

"What then?"

"I can very often laugh, *con amore*, but still I am not amused, I confess, even then."

"Exactly; you are only sneering." Violet blushed; she feared she had said something very rude.

D'Arcy was a little surprised; but he answered, "Well, and if I allow you are right, at my age you will often do the same. But how have you guessed so well?—you never saw me sneer?"

"Yes, I have, very often; I did not like you for it at first."

At first! thought D'Arcy.

"I must be honest enough to confess I never meant you to have made this discovery," continued D'Arcy. "While I am near you, my mind is in such a different state from what it is at any other time: I hoped you would only have judged of me as such as I am when with you; for you have the power (I have learnt it now) to awaken all that is good within me; and it is hard that, without my leave, you should have seen the *revers de la médaille*."

"I think you ought to be so glad, on the contrary. I could not endure being better thought of than I deserve; I would rather, almost, that a person had too bad, than too good an opinion of me."

"I do not doubt it; but you and I are such different persons: there is a perfection about you that Nature has utterly denied to me. I sink beneath my own iniquity, and will willingly stoop to deceive—that is, when I care to do so."

"Oh, I don't say that: I dislike deceit."

"But if frankness should bring upon me your despalis?"

"Never: and, besides, I thought, before, you *were* frank; now I almost fear you were not."

"Did you think thus of me before, Miss Woodville?" said D'Arcy, brightening: "thank you; you shall see, from this day forward, a want of sincerity shall not prove my failing in your eyes; I will promise *that*, at every hazard. Am I restored a little to your good opinion?"

"Yes, a little, you are," answered Violet, smiling; and both were silent, and both were happy.

"Miss Woodville," at length, said D'Arcy, "there are those, I fear, of whom you think much better than of myself; are there not?"

"No, Mr. d'Arcy."

"No? Yet others have tried, more daringly than I have ventured upon doing, to gain your approbation. I began by admiring; I have ended by fearing you; and when I approach you, I am actually timid."

"Oh, no, Mr. d'Arcy," replied Violet, gravely; "you will not make me believe that: I am not a person to intimidate any one."

"Not even a lover?" said D'Arcy, in a very low and clear voice.

Violet blushed and started.

"Not even a lover?" repeated D'Arcy, when he received no answer.

"No, no; why should, why should they——"

"It would depend upon the measure of their affection," said D'Arcy; "but then *you* could not be loved moderately. Oh, heavens! what a world of affection might live for ever upon one look from you!"

"I have no lovers, Mr. d'Arcy, so I know nothing of all this, and I could make no one feel timid, I am sure; and there is no one ready, with such a great deal of affection to bestow upon me, who, perhaps, would be very undeserving of it all."

"I could contradict all you have said — I see you would rather I did not."

D'Arcy rose abruptly, and went towards Mr. Harcourt, who entered the room at that moment, looking uncommonly bashful, and as if he knew he was a very naughty boy indeed.

"Allow me to support you on this trying occasion," said D'Arcy. "I will give you the aid of my presence, so as to enable you to approach somewhat nearer to the chair of *la dame de vos pensées*."

"Why of course," said Harcourt, seriously, "a man in my situation does feel very awkward: Emily is such a very correct person — that anecdote about the chain must have offended her—

my own demerits, to see she is not unjust when she disdains."

"My father, I think, must want me, I will go to him," said Violet, rising from her seat.

"Going, Miss Woodville?" exclaimed Mr. Goring, in pretended astonishment, and annoying high spirits; and, as he spoke, he stood before her with his arms outspread, so as to impede her passage.

During the last ten minutes, Violet Woodville had been enduring great annoyance. She was hurt to the quick by Mr. Goring's manner, and his words too, and she thought to herself, all this he thinks he may say to me because I am only an opera-dancer; if I were anything else he would not venture to have behaved thus. But now, as he stood insolently before her, Violet suddenly summoned her courage, and she answered Mr. Goring's question, when he repeated it,—“Going, Miss Woodville, going?”

“Yes, Mr. Goring, you have been so agreeable, were I to stay longer I should be quite spoiled.”

D'Arcy offered her his arm, she took it, and he led her instantly to her father, who was with the music party at the end of the room, and, as well as Mrs. Woodville, intently listening to Madame N——singing Gluck's beautiful ‘Eurydice,’ and the music of that beautiful song soothed the feelings of the wounded Violet Woodville, and she could have listened for ever to one of the most enchanting airs that was ever composed.

“Did you hear that impertinence?” said Mr. Goring, turning round to his companions.

“Not at all,” cried two or three youths at once, “not at all, you deserved it, Goring,—you were very uncivil to her.”

“Pray, what did I say that was uncivil?”

“Oh! it was your manner, you know you meant it.”

“Well, I wonder what right she has to expect anything better? She is Stanmore's mistress, if she belongs to no one else.”

“What's that you say? She is a dear, honest, real little Venus, that I will swear to,” cried a half-fledged, tender-hearted young midshipman, reddening with zeal.

“No, no, come, come, be fair, Goring. She's a good girl now, and Spenser is right,” said one,

"Yes," cried another; "and Stanmore would not stand by hearing you take away her character, I can tell you, if he were here."

"No, poor little girl," exclaimed a third, "she is only too honest for it to last, I fear."

"You *hope*, you mean."

"Granted, for she is honest,—so, Goring, don't scandalize her because you don't happen to be the favourite; that's not fair, Goring."

"Never mind, Goring; perhaps you will be the winning horse next time," said the young sailor again; "there's more pretty girls than one in the world, though there's not another in Europe half as pretty as Miss Woodville; but then, you know, some people must take what they can get,—that's what they tell the Middies on board the *Atalanta*."

Mr. Goring, finding by these observations that he had the worst, and not the best of it, acknowledged his error; but added, he had no idea of an Opera-dancer standing up for virtue; in former days they would not have dared to have thought about such a thing,—it was all that cursed cant about Reform which had brought things to such a pass.

"My dear Violet," said Mr. Woodville, "Mr. d'Arcy was talking a great deal to you last night at Mrs. Norris's; what was he saying to you?"

"Oh papa, Mr. d'Arcy is such a good person!" exclaimed Violet, eagerly; "when I find how different other people can be, I like him so much!"

Mr. Woodville opened his eyes; he was sitting at breakfast with his daughter.

Poor Mrs. Woodville was studying very hard the part of Elvira, in *Pizarro*, which she had been requested to perform on an emergency at Covent Garden, on a two days' notice.

"What's that you say about Mr. d'Arcy, Charles?"

"We were talking,—I and little Violet."

"Oh, very well; I am not attending,—I cannot. While I think of it, Mr. *Pizarro*,—Mr. Woodville, I mean,—mind I have ordered some nice little landrails for dinner; they are expensive little birds, to be sure; but I am fond of them, and my cold is so bad,—so I

thought we would have a treat. If my voice is not better by to-morrow, I shall never be able to get through the great tragedy scenes about the child, and the little pathetic parts: I must have some new eggs beat up."

"Well, Violet," resumed Mr. Woodville, having previously expressed himself content with the prospect of the landrails, "we did not end our remarks about Mr. d'Arcy."

"No, papa, but now I will tell you all about it."

"About what, Violet?" exclaimed Mrs. Woodville.

"How you do interrupt one!"

"To be sure, that must be the case as long as you sit here, my dear!" said Mrs. Woodville. "Mr. Woodville, I suppose I am to have some breakfast, though I am to act at Covent Garden to-morrow night. How rude you are sometimes,—and so unfeeling too,—cut me another slice of bread and butter, Violet. I hope I shall not forget to tell Hummings that the landrails must not be over-roasted; that dries them up, and they are not so good."

"Well, Violet, so what did M. d'Arcy say, to please you so much?"

Violet recounted to her father Mr. Goring's disagreeable manners, and the opposite conduct of M. d'Arcy.

"Mr. d'Arcy behaved like a gentleman, and Mr. Goring did not;" replied Woodville. "But, Violet, I am not for Mr. d'Arcy falling in love with you, or you with him."

"No, papa: but then he is not in love with me," said Violet, blushing, "I assure you."

"I suppose, you mean, he has not told you so,—eh, my darling child?"

"No, dear father, indeed he never has exactly, not yet."

"Well, Violet, you know I am not a silly, strict father, but I wish to caution you,—you are very young, my child,—you do not know the world, as I do; so it is I who, as your father, must be wise in time for you.

"You see, Violet, although you are a pretty little girl, you are not a lady. We have almost brought you up like one, and you are a great deal better than many ladies, every way, I'll be bound; but still you are not one. Every one knows your mamma acts, and that I play the violoncello, that we may earn money enough

to live, and for you, too, not to be ill off, happen what may.

"Now all these gentlemen that you meet with, and who make you such fine speeches, may in themselves, some of them, be very nice people, but they will not fall in love with you the less for that; and their telling you so means no good, for they will not marry you, Violet,—or if they would, their relations will not allow them to do so.

"They are to be blamed for it, when these gentlemen go too far, because they are well aware that though it *may* do you harm, it *can* do none whatever to them. Mind, Violet, I don't say it is an impossibility that you should ever marry a gentleman, for it is not; and you deserve it, if ever any one did; but it is not a likely thing: and when I see these young men buzzing about you, it alarms me, because I always guess it means no good.

"Now this Mr. d'Arcy is a very taking young man indeed; I myself cannot but like him, and he has an open way that wins one's heart, somehow. At first, too, I thought he came to see you because he was Lord Stanmore's great friend." Woodville sighed,—partly because he was out of breath, for he was not in the habit of delivering such long speeches. "And now I do think it is all for himself, or rather for you, Violet, that he likes to see us. But that will not do,—Mr. d'Arcy is not a gentleman who will ever think of marrying, were he to be in love ever so,—he is not a marrying person,—and, indeed, I have heard one or two things of him, which have made me not like him quite so well. At all events, I don't wish you to like him too much, Violet." He paused at length, and Violet Woodville trembled as she ventured to ask her father, what it was he had heard against Mr. d'Arcy.

"They say he is very apt to fall in love, and not very long either to care for one lady."

"Oh, father, that is so unlike Mr. d'Arcy's manner,—he has enemies who say this!"

"His manner is not what is to tell us about a gentleman's constancy. But I did not think my saying this would annoy you, as I see it does,—you must like Mr. d'Arcy very much, I begin to think, Violet?"

"No, indeed, father; but only be just to him, and I—I will do anything you like,—only pray don't be unkind to Mr. d'Arcy



on my account,—because he has been so kind,—and I am sure he does not deserve that.”

“ Well, Violet,” said Mrs. Woodville, looking off her book, “ I have been hearing something of what your father’s been saying, and I hope you will attend to it,—you have been distracting me sadly. What I still expect is, that Lord Stanmore will propose for you, my dear; what I always say is, why should not he? But it is right of your father to tell you not to think of him only, all day long, because there is no saying; and, if his mother should get better, which she may, you are sure she will be against you. Now, call Hummings.—she must be home from the green-grocer’s by this time; before she does the dinner, I must speak about the landrails, or I know they will be dried to a chip. Lock up the tea, Violet. John,” said Mrs. Woodville, turning to the slender-looking footboy, who entered the room, “ is Mrs. Hummings not come in yet?”

“ No, Ma’am; am I to take away the breakfast things?”

“ Yes; and another time, leave out the word *things*,—breakfast,—not breakfast things. Let me know when Hummings does come back. There’s a ring at the door; oh, it’s only Dupas.”

The old Frenchman was always well received by the Woodvilles, and Violet loved the old man.

“ So,” gaily exclaimed M. Dupas, “ I hear of nothing but Violet’s lovers; she is a sly little thing, and never tells me a word about them; but I see and I hear,” and he winked good-humouredly at his protégée,

“ Well, Dupas, let us have them,—count them up for me, like the cherries on a string, that I may hear and choose for her myself,” said Woodville, laughing.

“ Well, then, I am told there’s Mr. d’Arcy thinks of no such thing but Miss Violet, and never goes anywhere but he is to see my little pupil. Is that so?”

“ You see I was not so wrong, Violet,” said Mr. Woodville, archly. Violet blushed and laughed; for she had recovered a little from the conversation with her father, and she could not help feeling gratified that people thought Mr. d’Arcy did care for her. But she was embarrassed, and she caught hold of M. Dupas’ two hands, and began dancing with him the part she had to per-

form with her supposed lover in the ballet. M. Dupas only laughed, and looked at her dancing with delighted eyes.

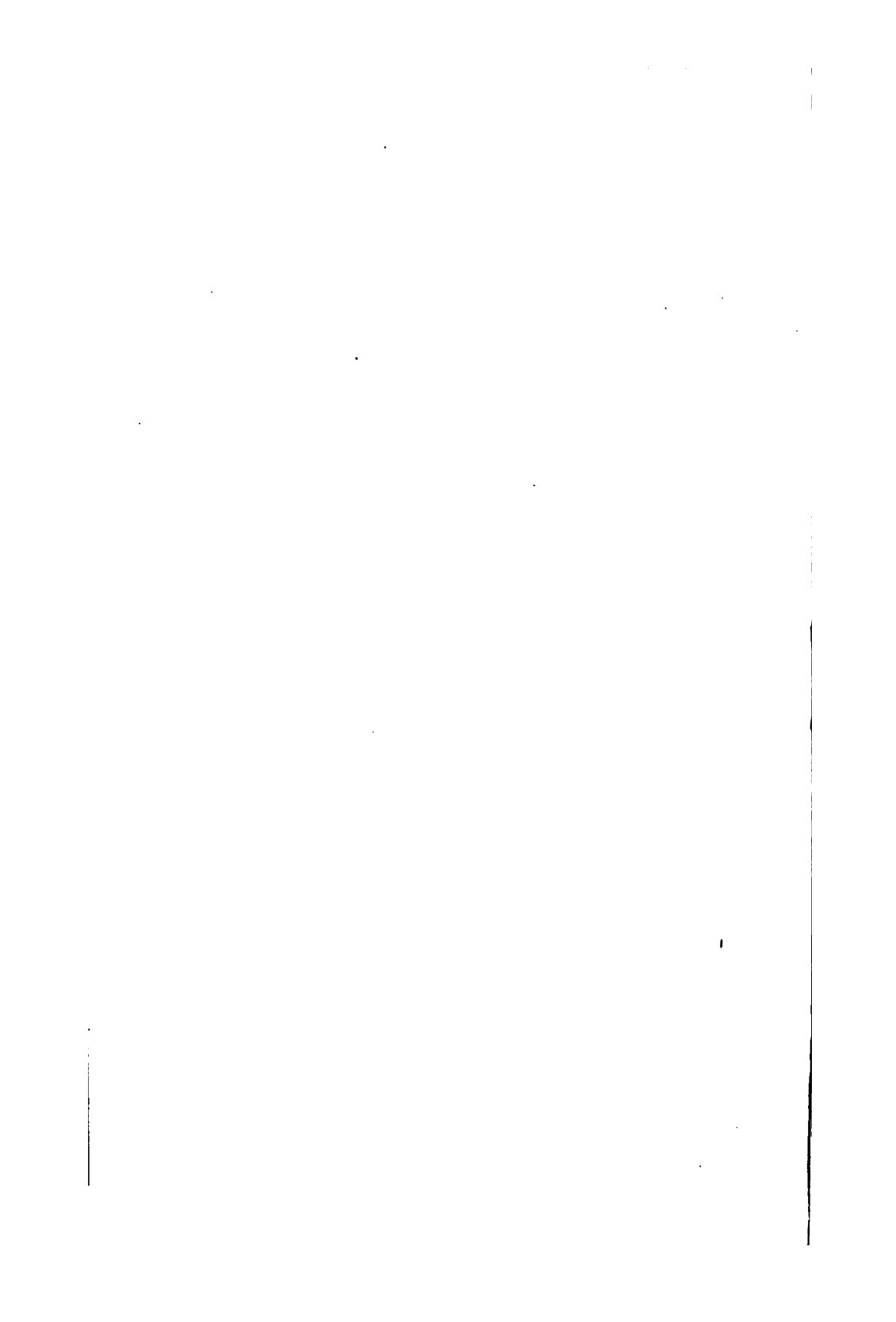
"M. Dupas," said Mrs. Woodville, "what do you think of Mr. Harcourt's marrying Emily Norris?"

"He will not do it, I am sure."

"Well, I must leave you,—for I am so taken up with this new part I have to act on a day or two's notice. I suppose Hummings is come home by this time. Perhaps you will dine with us to-day, M. Dupas?"

M. Dupas accepted the invitation.





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## CHAPTER VI.

"Thus doth the wily fisher weave his net."

"Alack, alack! that heaven should practise stratagems  
Upon so soft a subject."

ROMEO AND JULIET.

WHILE Violet Woodville and her father were talking about D'Arcy, they little imagined where he was at that very time bestowing himself. D'Arcy was walking up and down within five doors of the Woodvilles' abode.

He did not look pleasant, he yawned, and with his stick he beat his boot, and once he struck the iron railing very hard. He kept continually looking over his shoulder, and occasionally walked round the corner of the street, but always re-appeared in a few seconds, though cautiously, and with the air of a man who is wisely thinking, when he cannot observe much himself, that neither can he be much observed. At first, he only looked impatient and bored beyond endurance.

It is astonishing what changes come over a visage, which can reflect with much expression the workings of the mind. D'Arcy's was absolutely peculiar, from the force of his countenance upon all occasions.

Any one aware of his intimacy with the Woodvilles would have expected, perhaps, to see D'Arcy, as he was so long in their street, either gazing sentimentally up at the windows of the house, where he might have beheld part of Violet's sleeve or Mrs. Woodville's cap-string,—things quite important enough for a lover's fancy to feed upon a whole day ; or that, in the hope of being seen, though he could not see, he would have continued his walk in front of the house ; or, at least, that his eyes should have wandered to the front door, as if from that issue he trusted for the reward of his pedestrian watchings. But not a bit of it, for D'Arcy's eyes were invariably inclined in one direction only, and that was always downwards.

It was almost as if the brick foundation alone of Mr. Woodville's house drew his attention,—the bottom'of the iron railings, or the lowest step of the door,—down it was, always down, that his eyes were directed.

At last he became more demonstrative in his actions, for he went and peeped into the area, and presently did so again : this time it was a satisfactory survey, for, with excessive alertness, D'Arcy retreated backwards, and began walking rapidly, but looking now as if he wished to knock hardly anybody down, instead of everybody, so that it was plain he was at once in better humour.

In the meantime a woman was seen slowly ascending from the said area. She was rather stout, and forty ; she had on a cotton gown, a white apron, a coal-scuttle black bonnet, and horrid shoes upon criminal hoofs (for it would not be right to designate them as feet) ; and, without describing her any further, it is sufficient to say that, seen from any point of view, she might have been deemed peculiarly exempt from the power of inspiring any man with the desire for her presence manifested by D'Arcy. She was never intended to have to resist the insidious attentions of a man *à bonnes fortunes*. It might be charitably inferred that Providence had considered these small temptations as unnecessary trials, and, had, therefore, placed this good woman specially beyond their influence.

The respectable person in question was no other than Mrs. Hummings, and she it was who fulfilled the functions of ladies' maid, cook, and housekeeper in the Woodville *ménage*. She it

was also who escorted Violet Woodville in her morning walks.

D'Arcy had ascertained, by means of a servant he had sent to reconnoitre on six successive mornings, that it was at this hour, namely, between ten and eleven, that Mrs. Hummings was in the habit of leaving the house upon the furtherance of some domestic affairs; for instance, there was a connexion between these matutinal walks and the landrails Mrs. Woodville was to eat for her dinner that day.

D'Arcy desired to speak with Mrs. Hummings, and to do so cost him all the bore and the exertion of which the reader has been made aware. Now he beheld her : there she was, plodding first down one street, then up another.

D'Arcy only waited till Mrs. Hummings was out of sight of Mrs. Woodville's house, in order to address her. He felt his courage rather at a low ebb, when he made up his mind that now or never was the moment of attack.

He switched his cane several times, coughed, kicked and scuffled with his boots, and, at last, brought himself into a parallel line with the black coal-scuttle bonnet.

First imagining, and then finding she really had less room on the pavement than previously, Mrs. Hummings looked round and saw D'Arcy. She altered here pace,—but he did the same; she eyed him sternly,—but D'Arcy replied by an affable smile. “Ma'am,” said he, “could you be so very obliging as to direct me to — street?”

“Yes, sir; turn to the right, and then to the left, and there you are.”

“Thank you, ma'am. Pray have I not the pleasure of speaking to a most respectable domestic in the family of Mr. and Mrs. Woodville?”

“Yes, sir; did you want any thing with them? I know your face, as coming there very often sir.”

“No, — but I have much wished to see you, and have sought this opportunity of meeting you.”

“Sir!” said Mrs. Hummings, looking less condescendingly; “what is that you're saying, sir?”

“I own, I have desired to see you, Mrs. Hummings; I have so constantly heard your praises from all the family, that I was well

aware of the lady-like person I should find you, and that knowledge gives me courage to address you on a little business of my own."

Mrs. Hummings had been colouring very much while D'Arcy spoke, and she now turned full round upon him, with red cheeks, and, likewise, red eyes like a leopard's, so, at least, they seemed to poor D'Arcy, while she exclaimed, "Sir! a gentleman like you, visiting our family, ought to be ashamed of yourself, for looking after a respectable woman like me, that's old enough to be your mother. Sir! I would have you to know better!"

Mrs. Hummings bounced past D'Arcy, as if she did not mean her last words to be taken in vain.

There's no saying what D'Arcy felt; but he had a material point to gain,—he was a man of great courage, and he did not allow his feelings to divert him from its pursuit, — he followed Mrs. Hummings.

"Good heavens, ma'am! could you for a moment suppose I had the intention to insult a lady like yourself? of whose excellent character I was that instant telling you I had been so well-informed?—my business with you was not exactly about yourself."

These words struck Mrs. Hummings; she began to think she had been precipitate in her comprehension of D'Arcy's discourse. It may have been owing to a little adventure, of the nature she now suspected, having befallen her the previous week, in an ill-lighted street, and whilst the moon was under a cloud, that Mrs. Hummings was on this occasion so susceptible. Having discovered her mistake, she was anxious, by her present civility, to make amends for it.

The ice broken, and upon the whole, as D'Arcy hoped, not unsuccessfully, he ventured to proceed, and requested Mrs. Humming's approval of his joining herself and Miss Woodville the next morning in Kensington Gardens, should they happen to be there. D'Arcy explained that Violet had no knowledge of his request, but he said he had something of importance to communicate, and that this was the only means of conversing with Miss Woodville alone. He hoped, therefore, that Mrs. Hummings would be so kind as not to mention to Mr. or Mrs. Woodville the fact of his designing to meet their daughter, as they might, or might not, approve of it;

D'Arcy said he really could not say which, but at all events, he observed, under her chaperonage, Mrs. Hummings must be aware there would be no impropriety in his appearing accidentally to meet Miss Woodville in Kensington Gardens."

"What's the meaning of that word, sir?" asked Mrs. Hummings, gloomily.

"What word?"

"Some such word as *chappingage*.—What do you mean by saying that sort of word to me, sir?"

"Oh, I understand," answered D'Arcy, hardly able to conceal his laughter, while he explained the meaning of the word chaperonage, and at the conclusion of the explanation he slipped a couple of sovereigns into Mrs Hummings' red ungloved hand. Mrs. H. stared, and tried to return the money; D'Arcy would not hear of it. "I could not,—I could not, Mrs. Hummings,—I only attempted to make a small amends for the unfortunate alarm I at first occasioned you by my abrupt intrusion; as a proof of your forgiveness, I must beg,—indeed, I must desire you will say no more about it. I fear I have already taken up your time too much—I hope you will be good enough to—to"—D'Arcy hesitated with his words, for he hardly knew what he was saying.

At that moment he beheld, advancing up the street, a well known associate whom he would rather not have met just then.

At that hour of the morning, D'Arcy considered he was quite safe, and might devote, unseen, his attentions to Mrs. Hummings; nothing but a clerk of the Foreign office could be visible at such an hour, and this was not the way to Downing-street: otherwise, his present companion was not the lady he would have aimed at being seen to escort; and there could not have occurred a more laughable circumstance to any creature who knew D'Arcy, than to have beheld him at this moment.

Besides the sort of person D'Arcy was in himself, he was always remarkably *recherché* in his dress; he was not less so than usual now, and Mrs. Hummings, of all people in the world, offered a singularly uninviting contrast to D'Arcy. Still there he was, bending his head under her black, horrible bonnet, and talking with all the eagerness he might have done, if she had not been old, or ugly, or honest,—in one sense of the word.



The first two qualities Mrs. Hummings did not concern herself about ; it was her having some glimmering of the last-mentioned one which caused her still to hesitate, while D'Arcy felt as if he could have hung her up to the next lamp-post. " Nonsense, nonsense ; it can do Miss Woodville no harm. Well, only for once—I cannot stay—I see a friend ; now, my dear Mrs. Hummings!—there ; what does it signify—who will know?"

Between Mrs. Hummings's anxiety to return the sovereigns, and D'Arcy's impatient refusal to receive them, they very nearly dropped. D'Arcy could only exclaim, " Turn round that corner ; get out of the way ;" and, without waiting for the reply, walked quickly up the street, till he was within hail of his unwelcome friend.

" He cannot have seen her," said D'Arcy to himself, but almost aloud, as he joined a pale and interesting-looking young man, of distinguished appearance.

D'Arcy turned his head—Mrs. Hummings had obeyed his injunctions, and was out of sight.

" My dear fellow, how glad I am to see you!" cried D'Arcy, with extended hands.

" And so am I to see you, D'Arcy ; but I did not expect to do so just here. Who on earth were you talking to, when I saw you at the end of the street?"

" Oh, an old woman, wife of a man I owe some money to."

" Oh, a dun!—but what has fetched you out, at this time of day, in such a direction as this?"

" I had to see that woman, and have a good deal to do to-day ; so I got up early."

" Not a bit of it, D'Arcy : you have got some love affair in the wind."

" What! with that old devil, do you think?—But tell me,—how is Lady Stanmore?"

D'Arcy's companion looked grave at once, although he answered " Better, thank God!—My Mother has been wretchedly ill ; but they do think her better—at least I was assured there is no immediate danger, or you may be certain I should not have left her. But I have been out of London so long, that I had much to arrange, and am obliged to be in town for a day or two ; but I shall return to my poor Mother the moment I can."

"When did you come up?"

"Last night."

"Where are you going?"

"I am almost ashamed to say; however, to you, I——"

"Shall we walk on together?"

"Do. But—why, I will tell you where I was going,—to those Woodvilles; it is so long since I have seen them; but I am half ashamed to confess it."

"Pshaw; I know them very well too—now, she is a beautiful little girl: I am almost in love with her myself."

"What has she been at, D'Arcy?"

"Nothing, I think; the father and mother keep such a look-out upon her."

"They are right; for she is almost too good to be thrown away. But what men are about her?"

"There's Goring, chiefly, I suspect—and Dormer, besides Cramden; but it was before you left town Cramden began with her, was it not?"

"Yes; but doesn't she encourage any of them?"

"No; it's very odd; but I don't think she does."

"Singular! for there is not one of those girls that dance that ever were good for anything; or, if they are in the beginning, they are always utterly and entirely corrupted in six months."

"Utterly and entirely——"

"Extraordinary, is not it?"

"Most extraordinary!"

"By-the-bye, D'Arcy, did it ever appear to you as if she cared for me at all?"

"No; I never observed anything, as if she did in the least."

"Oh," said Lord Stanmore, in a mortified tone, "I was fool enough to think she liked me better than other people, at one time."

"Well, I dare say she did; but, you know, you have been away a month; and, you know, *'les absens ont toujours tort.'*"

"She is a beautiful creature, D'Arcy, is she not?" said Lord Stanmore, thoughtfully.

"Yes, beautiful!"

"Such a graceful being?"

"So graceful!"

"And such pretty manners?—so unlike any thing belonging to her class!"

"So unlike!"

"Nothing plebeian about her—the most aristocratic loveliness she has; hasn't she?"

"Oh, she has, certainly."

"I wonder," pursued Lord Stanmore, as if he were thinking aloud—"I wonder what will be the fate of a creature like that? If she is virtuous, she will end by having a rich tradesman's low-souled son for her husband; or else some rascally singer at the Opera will marry her, to make money by her talents—spend it—ill use, and, probably, abandon her!"

"Just so——"

"And how hard, that that should be the result of having a mind superior to the set of people she associates with!"

"Oh, so hard!"

"D'Arcy, what are you about?—you don't talk; for the last half hour you have done nothing but echo my words."

"Have I? Oh, I suppose I was thinking of something else. I have been so bothered lately: I am waiting all this time, you know, for an appointment abroad."

"But I thought you had got that settled?"

"Why, so I had; but I can't leave England just now—I am so in debt, and it does not suit me. So I have made a compromise; for I found out I should oblige Lord——, by pretending not to be in a hurry; and he gave G——, his nephew, my appointment: I am to have another later. I want to get something in England, if I can—I mean to try."

"Well, I am so glad to have met you, D'Arcy."

By this time the two friends had reached the street wherein was Mr. Woodville's house, and D'Arcy was taking leave of Lord Stanmore, when the latter exclaimed, "Oh, but do come in with me here; I had almost rather you would; I am out of spirits, and you will help me to get on with them; it is difficult sometimes to find conversation for these sort of people; and as you know them——"

D'Arcy did not require to be asked twice.

The Woodvilles were much surprised by the appearance of Lord

Stanmore, and Woodville was too open-hearted not to make his satisfaction evident, while Mrs. Woodville made a thousand kind inquiries after the mother of *her* intended son-in-law.

Lord Stanmore cared little to reply to her; he only wanted to talk to, and too look at Violet.

I do not know that we can ever more fully tell how dear another is to us, than when we meet them after an absence. We did not know before how the sight of that object could make our pulses beat, or chill us with the nervousness of insecure affection, so deeply felt by a doubting heart. These are feelings which have their silent agony, for they are among those that are never told, or if they are, who can imagine the mental suffering that has been endured by the mere force of the words in which those sufferings are told, words that seem trifling in the ears of even an interested listener. But so it is; our most unpleasant hours have often been occasioned by the smallest nothings, and quite as often by our own susceptibility alone. All of us perhaps have these sensations, but not one of us can enter into them when they are another's. Of this truth we have an innate consciousness, and from this cause the minutiae of any individual's unhappiness remain untold even to his most intimate friend. If, at the end of a long life, a prosperous man—one whose cares were established to have been but few — if this man could lay bare the whole past feelings of his existence, he himself would be astonished at the number of small and long-forgotten sorrows he had undergone; things so little tangible, that the pen could not define, and the tongue would have been despised for uttering them.

D'Arcy, after greeting Violet as usual, withdrew himself from her, and obligingly took up the attention of her parents and of M. Dupas, who was also in the room. A sufficiently animated conversation was thus got up between these four persons, which left Lord Stanmore at liberty to approach Miss Woodville. He was, however, embarrassed, and she felt so likewise, though from a different cause. She was conscious of being changed towards Lord Stanmore, now that she met him again, and by him was forcibly reminded that his attachment to her remained the same. Still she talked to him, and only grew absent when she began to remember that as yet D'Arcy had not once addressed her. This

was so unlike him, she was at a loss to account for it. He went on, however, talking to the Woodvilles as if Violet did not exist in his heart; and her astonishment at this neglect grew greater every minute; for we all know that if we ever make mountains of mole-hills, it is when our self-love is in the case.

At length there was a sort of general pause, which Mrs. Woodville interrupted by saying that to-morrow was to be the next Opera, the last night of her daughter's appearance this season.

"If I continue hearing that my mother is better, I shall certainly go to-morrow to the Opera," said Lord Stanmore. "D'Arcy, will you come to my box?"

"No," replied D'Arcy; "I have an engagement that will prevent me, one I cannot avoid."

Violet heard, but she thought she could not have heard. She looked at her admirer, but his face was not turned towards her. Her manner grew feverish. When we are quite young, from being unused to deal with covert annoyances, we bear them not only impatiently, but betray by our deportment our secret discomfort.

D'Arcy's apparent neglect of her was as nothing to Violet, compared with his declaration that he should not go to the Opera on her last night!

Violet could not recover from the dismay it occasioned her; and in vain she tried to read D'Arcy's mind in his countenance. Lord Stanmore in the mean time felt deeply hurt by the comparatively cold reception he received from Miss Woodville; and now in moody silence he ceased to address himself to her, and had it then been possible he would have expressed his perception of her estrangement. D'Arcy and his friend at length rose to take leave, and then the former fixed his eyes upon Violet. She looked at him, and hers were eyes that asked his pity. She almost drew her breath with hesitation, lest she should lose some one last word of D'Arcy's. She yet hoped to hear him inquire when he should again meet her.

D'Arcy had always found so many side-ways of ascertaining this, but not a syllable passed his lips in allusion to it. He held out his hand to bid her adieu, and Violet tried to speak, but the

words would not come. D'Arcy looked at her once more, but this time she was sick at heart and she saw him not.

Hitherto she had found D'Arcy her undeviating worshipper, to-day he seemed almost unconscious of her presence !

The door closed, and D'Arcy and Lord Stanmore were gone. Perhaps I shall never see him again, thought Violet Woodville, —for, reader, have you never felt (that is, if you have ever loved) that in moments of despondency this strange idea has risen in your mind ? It is but one of those spasms of a grieved heart that tears itself with every self-delusion. “My God ! then I have dreamt it all, and he does not care for me !”

Violet would have cast away that thought, but it recurred continually, and at night in her dreams it lived.

Lord Stanmore and his friend walked on in silence, at least up one street, and then it was Lord Stanmore who spoke.

“D'Arcy, what can have happened ?”

“What ? to whom ?”

“To her,—to Violet Woodville ; she is altered ; I find she is not the same person as when I left her.”

“You mean, in her manner towards yourself ?”

“Yes ; I find I must either have been egregiously mistaken in her, or——”

“Or what ?”

“Or that she is a thorough coquette, which I never can believe. Who in this world can one trust ?” exclaimed the young man.

“You are speaking very solemnly ; can it be possible that you are in love ?”

“To distraction ; and I do not care who knows it. Besides, I told you so long before.”

“Yes, but I did not believe you, although now I do.”

“And pray why *now* ?”

“I can conceive it so very possible, for I am myself in love with Violet Woodville.”

“You, D'Arcy ! are you in earnest ?”

“Yes, I think I am.”

“What do you mean to do ?”

“I was not sure whether through you I might not ascertain.”

"Pshaw ! you did not show any signs of caring for her during our visit."

"No; I thought I would give you a fair chance, as I have been able to make play during your absence. Not much, though; the father or mother, or that cursed old Frenchman, are always there; and you know, Stanmore, what an obliging fellow I can be to a friend that I like as yourself. So you got on ill with her this morning?"

"Devilish ill, I think, or she is changed; she was absent. Who has been making a fool of her while I have been away?"

"They have all been trying it; but I declare I cannot exactly say who our rival is."

"*Our!* you need not say *our*—I do not believe you are thinking of her."

"On my word I am. Why not!"

"I conceived you to be otherwise engaged; besides, she is not in your line."

"Oh," said D'Arcy, "but she is handsome enough for anything, and my heart is capacious."

"How I always hate your cold answers, D'Arcy. I am desperately in love with that girl," exclaimed Lord Stanmore passionately, and he stamped with his foot on the pavement.

"You will succeed with her at last, perhaps,—don't knock down that old barrow woman."

"Ah! I am not likely now; and those spies always about her, too."

"*They* would like you to marry her."

"Which, of course, I shall not do."

"I see you thought I expected you to say you would," answered D'Arcy, laughing aloud.

"No; and you need not laugh again in your vile way. But I do love her with all my soul; is she not a little divinity? But, D'Arcy, if you are so in love, why do not you go to the Opera to-morrow night?"

"Oh! that was still to give you an opportunity of making up for lost time. And so, Stanmore, you do not think she likes you now?"

"No; she used, or something like it. Can it be Goring? He

is such a brute she would only hate him. But I will see her again; and I will watch, — I will find out, — there is nothing I will not do."

"Well, shall I see you at Crockford's to night?"

"I think not; I am too unhappy, and altogether——"

Here Lord Stanmore and D'Arcy parted; the latter walked on with a light step, and was soon out of sight, while the young Peer proceeded more slowly in another direction.

Violet remained a prey to vexation of spirit. "How untrue to say youth is the happiest season of our life, with its keen feelings laying themselves so bare to the vulture, experience. Youth is a season that has no repose\*, we feel so acutely then, and every petty grief cuts like a sharpened razor.

Violet could not recover from D'Arcy's altered manner, and his declaration that he was not going to the Opera. She asked herself a hundred times, was he changed? Or, (the supposition flashed horribly across her,) had all D'Arcy's apparent liking merely been an interest, the source of which was in his friendship for her known admirer, Lord Stanmore? And now was he only desiring to promote the success of his friend?

If the supposition was far-fetched it was not unnatural, for love is so feeble in its judgments, so wonderful in its mental devices, so erring in its weaknesses, so bitter in its imaginings, so cruel in its suspicions, so unjust in its reasoning, so sublime in its folly, so partial in its arguments, and so ingenious in its self-torture, that there can be no limits to its inconsistency or to its doubts, and the power of the understanding sinks beneath the force of that single passion, even while its strength is weak.

Or, can I have offended him, thought Violet? wronging her gentle heart with the idea.

The morning following this inauspicious visit was a bright day in August, and we all know the relief given to the spirits by obtaining fresh air and exercise; so Violet was not less ready than usual to set forth upon her morning walk with Mrs. Hummings. She intuitively desired by any means to dissipate her uncomfortable feelings. Every day and every hour that she had spent with

\* L. E. L.



D'Arcy, since the time she first knew him, had been conjured up by memory to soothe her grief, and to convince herself that D'Arcy's conduct must have been unintentional.

She proceeded along the straight walk by the elm trees in Kensington Gardens, without the spirits to explore the more intricate paths, as she sometimes did, enjoying with childish gaiety the freshness and the verdure.

Violet walked on slowly and in reverie, and Mrs. Hummings felt hardly more at ease than her young mistress, and secretly hoped that something would prevent Mr. d'Arcy from keeping his determination of meeting them; but the hope was hardly born in the tender bosom of Hummings, ere it was cruelly killed, by the appearance of D'Arcy walking quickly towards them.

When Violet saw him, she could scarcely believe her eyes—but he approached. “How singular,” she thought, “that he should be going this way, and at this hour,—as if it was really on purpose that I might see him! At all events, he must speak to me,—I shall have that pleasure,”—and with this conclusion her young heart bounded with joy; so when D'Arcy held out his hand, and smiled, it might be, more gravely than usual, but still with his accustomed tenderness, Violet felt only too happy, and her delight shone with exquisite truth in her lovely countenance!

“*Le sentiment vif court, tant que l'on veut les risques de l'illusion, et s'il se trompe quelquefois, il a aussi senti en récompense, et exprimé pour ainsi dire de l'objet qui lui est présenté, tout ce qu'il pouvait avoir de touchant.\**”

“I am so surprised to see you! where were you going?” inquired Violet Woodville, with bashful artlessness.

“I had no object except one,” replied D'Arcy, “I have but one in the world *now* I think, of any kind,—may I walk on with you? Tell me, if you would rather that I did not.”

“No,—no,”—stammered Violet; not very conscious what she ought to reply. “But shall I turn, as I met you going in the opposite direction.”

“*I was*, Miss Woodville,” answered D'Arcy, with emphasis.

“But if I knew your way,—the one you wished to go,—I would

\* *Portrait de Madame de Flamorens.*

so much rather—I mean just as soon walk that way as this;” Violet spoke with some confusion.

“It is the same to me. I came here but for the purpose of meeting you; did you actually suppose my coming here was accidental?”

“Indeed I did, Mr. D’Arcy. I could not tell that you desired to—to—to see me, at so early an hour,—and besides——”

“And besides; well, you do not continue?”

“And besides, I knew that you would call, if you wished to see us.”

“Yes; but in calling I could not have seen you alone, and the *gêne* of never doing so is insupportable to me,—I find I can bear it no longer!”

Violet turned her head in the direction of Mrs. Hummings, but she found her duenna had unaccountably lingered some paces behind.

“Listen to me,” said D’Arcy, impatiently, “do not look after that ugly old woman. Oh, listen to me for this once, at least,—I would give so much for one word of kindness from you,—for one word only, Miss Woodville,—will you listen to me if I tell you?”

“I do not know what you are going to say,” exclaimed Violet, blushing. “But another time, not now,—I believe I ought to be going home.”

“The vain excuse!—Yes, now it shall be,—but you well know—you must long have seen it.—I shall say nothing that could surprise you,—and yet”——D’Arcy paused, and appeared to reflect.

Reader, I know not why he hesitated, nor can I guess at the nature of his reflections. He spoke again after a few seconds, and bending over the cast-down eyes of Violet, he uttered, with a tone of humbleness, and of dejection too: “I was going to tell you,—as I do now,—that I love you!”

At least, there is one word in the English language that has music in its sound,—Love! Who can pronounce it, and not say it is a gentle word, soft and beautiful as its meaning? Oh! breathe it how, and when, and where you will, is it not always a touching word? and, should it be uttered by one whose affection we delight

in, it is a dream of bliss to hear it, and one that will be forgotten while every other joy lies buried beneath the sorrow that fails us not; covering with its heavy mantle the happy hours that have gone before. But, as first uttered by a loved being, the memory of that word will endure.

It may be heard again and again, yet will not half its charm be the hope of once more feeling the magic pleasure its sound at first conveyed? Oh no, those feelings we can never know twice, whether they are called into being in the spring of life, or in later years, it matters not.

Violet Woodville made no reply to D'Arcy, but she hung down her head, and blushed deeply. D'Arcy watched her in silence. At length he whispered, "Am I not to hear one word from you,—you surely are not offended with me?—you cannot be; and the declaration of a great affection, be it from whom it may, can merit no despial."

"Alas!" said Violet, with an unequal voice, "if I knew but what to answer, Mr. d'Arcy!"

In his heart, D'Arcy felt how much more these guileless words conveyed than their speaker imagined.

"Tell me, at least, that you believe me!"

"Even that I cannot do. I have been so taught to disbelieve all such professions, that how am I to know yours are more to be relied on than others'?"

"To whom would you compare me?" exclaimed D'Arcy. "To the tribe who haunt you? who admire you, I grant,—but admiration is not love;—you do not think that one of all those men feels towards you as I do? or is it possible that you can do me the injustice of thinking so?"

"But then, Mr. d'Arcy, what is the reply you desire me to make? do you wish me to declare that I suddenly place faith in you—and on your simple showing?—rest convinced henceforth, that you do—love me."

"Say it, oh say! you believe that I do!"

Violet shook her head.

"I see it all," cried D'Arcy, his countenance darkening. "There is another person who might have made this declaration, and it would then have been more acceptable."

"On my word you are wrong," said Violet Woodville, vehemently, "there is no one in the world I care for in the sense you mean."

"Not even Stanmore, I suppose?" her lover ironically demanded.

"No, Mr. d'Arcy, not even Lord Stanmore."

"At all events you hate me?"

"Oh no!"

"Oh no," said D'Arcy, repeating her words in the softest tone of his musical voice, "but since you will not believe I love you, why should I believe that you do not hate me?"

"At all events, you did not even like me yesterday," Violet replied, partly in the endeavour to lead the conversation into another strain. "You would not speak to me, Mr. d'Arcy," and she coloured violently.

D'Arcy answered readily, by quoting the beautiful old verses of Sir Walter Raleigh.

"Wrong not, sweet mistress of my heart,  
The merit of true passion,  
With thinking that he feels no smart  
Who sues for no compassion.

"Since if my plaints were not t' approve  
The conquest of thy beauty,  
It comes not from defect of love,  
But fear t' exceeding duty.

"For, knowing that I sue to serve  
A saint of such perfection,  
As all desire, but none deserve,  
A place in her affection,

"I rather choose to want relief,  
Than venture the revealing;  
Where glory recommends the grief,  
Despair disdains the healing."

"You have a good memory, Mr. d'Arcy; are you fond of poetry?"

"No—yes,—we will not discuss that now; and will you not vouchsafe me one word of kindness?"

Violet was silent,—she at last replied, but it was with an effort —"I wish to say nothing that is ungracious to you, Mr. d'Arcy; but since you call upon me for my sentiments, may I not tell you that if you do, as you say, love me—would not the best proof of it have been to have avoided the conversation you have now begun? It must end here,—I am quite aware that it ought to do so."

Violet spoke with a quivering lip. She knew not how her words might be taken by D'Arcy, and she dreaded to offend him, as we ever dread to offend everything we love,—nor could she love the less for being so lately told she was beloved.

"I have said nothing that is disrespectful to you, Miss Woodville," replied D'Arcy, with gentleness, "that, at least, I am incapable of. But I did not think I should find you the one who would receive with coldness the avowal of a true affection. I have not asked you to return it,—I am conscious, alas! that I have no right to do so; but your pity I had hoped for,—and if you did but know what it is to love, and to love as I do, you would not thus have denied it to me. It was all I hoped to obtain from you. Others may be more fortunate than I can be,—they may win the heart whose slightest wish I could kneel to listen to. I have not known you long; but from the hour I first saw you I was touched by you. I admired your excessive beauty, and wondered at its perfection; then I heard you speak, and as I grew to you I became fascinated. At first I despised myself for my folly, for so I thought it; and, until I met with you, I never conceived that I could feel for any living being as I do towards you. You treat me with indifference,—well, be it so,—I cannot care the less for you; and could I serve you I would lay down my life to do it. I am most unhappy; and, on my honour, I have not uttered one word that is not true."

"I am flattered," said Violet, "that you should think it worth your while to tell me this; and if you do—if you do love me, as you desire me to believe,—you can understand that, as I never can return your affection, it is better for me to avoid the possibility of being led to do so."

"There is no danger of that, Miss Woodville."

"I know not, and it is better, therefore, to think no more of it."

"Yes; but, as far as I am concerned, that is not done so easily, —and I really cannot see, while others are allowed to say all that I have said to you, why I am to be made the exception?"

"But others do not say to me what you have said, at least never with my permission."

"Not Lord Stanmore, for instance?"

"Again? not even Lord Stanmore."

"You will not tell me that you do not know that he is in love with you?"

"But that I cannot help; what I mean is, that he has no opportunity of telling me so that my parents could disapprove of."

"Well, I see that I have nothing to hope for. You will have many admirers, Miss Woodville, I do not doubt; but you may believe me when I say that mine is a better love than theirs. I would have devoted myself to you—I should have prized you more than anything that exists in the world; and could I have met from you with but the slightest kindness, I think I could have lived for years on the bare recollection of it, and should have gloried in proving that my words have not deceived you, and that mine was an undying affection. As it is, I wish to spare myself further pain — I shall shortly leave England, and it will be for years."

Violet turned very pale, but she made no answer.

"When I return, be it when it may, or it may never be — the bitterest recollection I shall have ever known will await me — of one whose affection, whose pity, I sued for in vain: and no term of years, and no absence, will efface from my memory the force of my feelings, or how my soul could have clung to loving the only thing I ever looked on and found no fault in."

"Why do you intend to remain so long abroad?" asked Violet with a faltering voice.

"Circumstances might oblige me, but independently of them, I solemnly declare to you, that you, and you alone, are the charm that makes me care for anything, even to live! I am old of my age, sometimes I am sick of life, and the beautiful part of human

nature has been hidden from me. I have known misfortune, I have endured vexation of spirit, I have lived to despise the world; above all, I have lived to doubt that one good and pure being existed in it; and then I met with you, and was forced to own such a one did exist. Your beauty and your artless character attracted me till I grew to love you, and madly. I have thought of you till I have conceived it to be all a wild dream, and that I had fancied it, but I saw you again, and you looked more beautiful. I heard your voice, and I heard your guileless, unspotted mind in the tones of that voice, as I saw it, too, in your speaking countenance, and worlds, had I possessed them, I would have laid at your feet!

"I grew to fear you, and I dared not tell you of my love. I sometimes thought you were a hallowed creature, and longed to worship you. Now I have told you all, and you have repulsed me. I did not know before how horrible it is to cast one's all of happiness upon a die and to lose it. While I have life I shall love you, and on earth I may never see you again!" D'Arcy stopped and held out his hand to bid her adieu.

Violet took it and burst into tears.

"Why, why do you shed tears?" exclaimed D'Arcy.

"I cannot bear you to leave England, Mr. d'Arcy," exclaimed Violet almost convulsively, as she wiped away the glittering drops.

"Never! I never will, if you will tell me to stay," he vehemently answered.

"Oh, no, not for me, not on my account," continued Violet almost inarticulately; "but do not go abroad, unless you must, pray do not."

"I would sooner die than do it now," exclaimed D'Arcy. "You are agitated—lean on me;" and he drew her arm through his, and neither of them seemed to remember that a Mrs. Hummings drew breath in the world.

"Oh, Mr. d'Arcy," said Violet, a little come to herself; "what I said was very foolish; I had no business to say it—you had better forget it."

"Forget it! I could not if I would. Do not be so ungenerous; grant me to live through one day, at least. I am but your slave—

I never can importune you ; and I would hide myself from every living thing sooner than annoy you. You have but to say the word, and I will still disappear from your sight for ever. But now, have patience with me. I am happier at this moment than I have been for years ! ” And Violet could hardly doubt that D'Arcy spoke the truth, for he looked so happy, and that was not his general expression.

The lovers walked on conversing till they reached the opposite gate. D'Arcy's respectful manner disarmed her of all mistrust, and, in spite of herself, Violet felt a joy she had never known in her life before.

And to-night I shall not see you, and it is your last night,” said D'Arcy, alluding to the Opera of that evening.

“ Where shall you be ? ” inquired Violet.

“ I have an engagement to go twenty miles from town with Lord ——, the minister for the Home Department. It is important for me to keep the engagement ; nothing, in fact, but necessity would make me give up the pleasure of seeing you to-night : as it is, I have not much chance of it, as I have to speak to Lord —— on business, and shall be detained, or I could still go to ——, and find myself in the Opera in time for the last act of the ballet. To-morrow I shall call at your house, if Mrs. Woodville is not informed of our meeting this morning ; she will not think my visit is made so very much too soon.”

“ But how is mamma not to know of my meeting with you ? ”

“ She cannot unless you tell her ; and surely that is not necessary, it would only occasion remarks, and for once there can be no objection to its not being known. But do as you judge best,” added D'Arcy.

“ But,” said Violet, “ there is Hummings, who will think it so odd ; and there is something so disgraceful in having anything to conceal from papa or mamma—I cannot bear it ! ”

“ Then tell Mrs. Woodville of our meeting. I advised you not, because I know what mammas are, and that yours is not aware that I am not like Goring, or any of those men whom it would not be so well for you to be on the same terms with. I myself should be wretched if you were. But your parents will not make the distinction ; and I flatter myself that you, at



least, think I deserve that you should have perfect confidence in me."

"And I have, Mr. d'Arcy. But there is still Hummings; she may speak of our walking together?"

"No, I think not—no, I am sure she will not. The truth is," continued D'Arcy, smiling, "I so wish to call upon you; and I fear, if, in addition to our walk to-day, I venture to appear in your house to-morrow, I shall be forbidden to do so ever again. . . . Shall I not?" asked D'Arcy, as he took and pressed the little hand of poor Violet, while he regarded her beseechingly to acquiesce.

Violet sighed: she felt there was something wrong in her conduct; but D'Arcy's arguments prevailed, and she agreed to conceal their having walked together.

No sooner had they parted, and she was slowly returning homewards, than she repented her agreement; but her mind was in a tumult of emotion, and hardly any idea was defined enough to become the one uppermost.

At one moment she was seized with the most poignant regret at having asked D'Arcy not to leave England; and felt she could do, or endure, anything to have the power of recalling her words.

"And what must it have made him think of me?" inwardly exclaimed Violet; and her delicacy shrank with dismay from this avowal of her feelings towards D'Arcy. Then, again, the idea rose in her mind, that had it been otherwise, she might have bade him an eternal adieu; and that, to a heart such as hers, was a thought too overwhelming in its misery. Sooner than that—sooner than part from D'Arcy, Violet would have given up her life, her happiness, her honour—no; that last sacrifice did not occur to her; or, if it did, it was so vaguely and so seemingly impossible, that it passed through her mind quicker than the bird of the ocean flies over its waves. She did not question the force of D'Arcy's love; she did not fathom the depth of her own; still she was aware that all this could have no good end, and felt a consciousness of future sorrow, and a dread of the day's coming when he must be taken from her. Then, again, Violet remembered that she was beloved by D'Arcy, and brooded over that conviction in silent happiness.

Suddenly she began to wonder what construction Mrs. Hum-

mings had put upon her meeting him, or whether she put any at all. She addressed her, and Mrs. Hummings, who was full of internal perplexity and uneasiness, answered submissively, and as if she were the culprit on this occasion, as in fact, though unknown to her mistress, she was.

"I think," said Mrs. Hummings, "it is of no use of our saying to your mamma or pa' of our a-meeting with Mr. d'Arcy; they may not desire as you should see him; and if you don't say nothing on it, I am sure I sha'n't think on it, Miss."

"Very well, Hummings," answered Violet, with an averted face, for her conscience would allow her to say no more; and she reached her home without again speaking to her attendant.



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## CHAPTER VII.

"Beauty lures the full-grown child :

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A chace of idle hopes and fears,  
 Begun in folly, closed in tears.  
 The lovely toy, so fiercely sought,  
 Hath lost its charm in being caught;  
 For every touch that wooed its stay  
 Has brushed its brightest hues away,  
 Till, charm, and hue, and beauty gone,  
 'Tis left to fly or fall alone."

BYRON.

"SHE is the finest creature I ever saw!" cried Lord Z—, as he surveyed Violet Woodville through his opera-glass.

The ballet had commenced, and Violet was dancing. "Astonishing! So much grace!—'Pon my soul, she is lovely, Goring!"

"Oh, yes; but it's no use—she wants the ring."

"Is it true that Stanmore marriesher?"

"No—I asked him; he turned sulky upon it; but swore it was not true. They say D'Arcy is the favourite."

"Oh, oh!—so he finds time for that, too, does he! How she has filled the house this season; and it is mere grace, excessive grace, and excessive beauty; for she does no *tours de force*, and her dancing is nothing compared with that of Heberlé and Mon-

tessu. She is really divine to-night. I should not wonder if Stanmore was fool enough to marry her—except that, in general, he is a clever fellow, I think.”

It was true that Violet never performed her part with more spirit, and never looked more beautiful. Her mind was yet joyful, and full of the impressions of the morning. At night, particularly, and in a scene of excitement, we remember with tenfold pleasure that which has pleased us, and we do so then without dwelling on the possibly attendant evils, however they may occur to us at another time. Violet was not without some of the natural pride belonging to her sex, and she was, in fact, more gratified on this night by the homage paid to her, than she had ever felt before. She knew she was handsome; but she was only vain when she thought of D’Arcy’s intense admiration; and his praise had made an impression upon her self-love, which the unceasing compliments of every man who addressed her had hitherto failed to effect.

One of the best boxes on the second tier was occupied by a single person, a young man; the curtain occasionally concealed his face, but generally there was something interesting in his close attention to the stage. His eyes wandered not from it, and the white-gloved hand, that rested on the edge of the box, was never moved except to convey the opera-glass to his eyes. Not once did he glance round the house, and the somewhat melancholy expression of his finely-cut profile remained undisturbed throughout the evening. Lord Stanmore,—for he it was,—appeared conspicuous from the house not being full. The season had drawn to its close.

There he sat, while to an observer his countenance betrayed a mind preyed upon by unpleasant reflections. It was not that he was moralizing; but it did strike him, as he gazed steadfastly at the beautiful opera-dancer, that it would be sad if a spoiler should come to blight the innate excellence of one so fair. And himself? Was it not his aim? had it not become his sole desire? But then rose up the melancholy conviction that the heart he had thus guiltily sought to win was not for him; either it never had been, or it had proved incredibly fickle.

“If she did but love me,” said Lord Stanmore to himself, “I

should be happy. She may be virtuous, and I know she is; but so sweet a disposition must err through its own tenderness,—and was it another who would be her seducer?" Lord Stanmore would not think it possible; he quailed under the supposition, and found himself muttering "The success of such black villainy would be incredible. It is a sacrilege to think she could be so debased;" he involuntarily exclaimed, as the loud plaudits of the pit woke him from the deep reverie in which the nature of his ideas had absorbed him.

It is of no use to say that the profession of an opera-dancer is a modest one; but it is fair to remember that to those who fulfill it it does not appear so immodest as to the spectator. From childhood they have been taught to look upon it professionally, and they grow up, seeing it in no other light. And thus it was with Violet: she disliked her profession, but it was D'Arcy who had led her to despise it.

She was quoted for the dignified modesty of her demeanour upon the stage; and it was remarkable how strongly her native character developed itself even there: the propriety of her demeanour had not failed to call forth merited surprise from many; in Lord Stanmore's eyes it was one of Violet's greatest charms.

On the night in question, probably because it was the last of her appearance, she was certainly more applauded than usual.

Violet felt, during some moments, a thrill of happiness almost too great to endure: it was when her eye fell upon D'Arcy, as he entered a box upon the same side as that of Lord Stanmore. He was in evident haste as he advanced to the front, and remained almost bending over the box, as if he never could sufficiently behold the goddess of the night. He was just in time; three minutes more, and the curtain dropped, and Violet's last vision was the admiring eyes of D'Arcy, as they sought her to the latest instant.

Violet never dressed at the Opera. She was on that night solely under the care of M. Dupas, and when the ballet was over, had nothing to do but to throw on her cloak and get into the hired carriage which was waiting for her. She reached home before she had recovered from the un hoped for pleasure of seeing D'Arcy. He must have made such haste to have been in time! It was twenty miles off where he dined.

M. Dupas descended from the carriage to assist his young charge in getting out, but the trouble was saved him, for another person lent her his aid.

"At least I have seen you," said a beloved voice; and Violet's hand was wrung by the pressure of D'Arcy's, and before she had recovered from her surprise, her lover had rapidly moved away. She flew to her room, it looked upon the street; to throw up her window, and to look out for D'Arcy was the work of an instant, but the light of the moon only discovered a solitary policeman, and the white reins of a cabriolet, as it turned the corner. Violet waited for the last sound of the wheels before she closed the window. She wondered whether M. Dupas had recognized D'Arcy. It was not a very clear night, and he was hidden by his cloak and a hat slouched over his features.

It was late when Violet came down to breakfast next morning, but this was a privileged adjournment.

Mr. Woodville was gone out, and Mrs. Woodville was engaged; still the apartment was not untenanted: M. Dupas was sitting there, with his legs crossed, and his eyes turned thoughtfully upwards, as if watching the summer flies gathering upon the ceiling; and he looked graver than he did in general.

M. Dupas had been handsome, at least his features indicated that he must have been so; and when excited his countenance became very animated, like that of most French people; but when this was not the case, his face was placid, and rendered pleasing by an expression of extreme benevolence. He was in fact a remarkable man for his age, which was rarely guessed, because his activity and neatness of dress made him pass for a much younger man.

His known worth, and their long acquaintance with him, caused him to be respected and looked up to by the Woodvilles; besides, independence of fortune always renders a man dearer to his friends, and it has before been said that Dupas was well off. By Violet he was loved: as a child he used to give her sugar-plums and story-books; and once had brought her from France a pair of blue shoes, which made a great impression on her. Then, as she grew up, she was often amused by him, for his conversation was entertaining, and through him Violet often heard of people

and events of which she would otherwise have known nothing.

This morning Violet was not as glad as usual to behold M. Dupas. She would have preferred being alone,—so many ideas were crowding upon her, and she was seeking to indulge them.

Love, when it gains possession of the mind, is like a bee in a garden; it is ever at work; and its restlessness, like that of the insect, never leaves an unbusy moment.

Violet sat down to her breakfast, and then M. Dupas inquired if she was not much fatigued; she answered languidly in the affirmative. The old man remained silent. Violet walked presently to the window and made some remark on the weather, but received no answer.

M. Dupas appeared absent; he tapped the lid of his gold snuff-box, and Violet said something else; instead of replying, her companion cast a look at the breakfast-table, at the broken bread on Miss Woodville's plate, and her half-finished cup of tea, and sighed, but at the same time he turned to address her.

“Will you let me give you advice, *un vieillard comme moi*, while it can be of use to you, *mon enfant*?” he said mildly. Violet took the chair he advanced to her, but she almost trembled.

“Do not let me vex you, *Violette*, you will have trouble enough in the world without my adding to it; but advice is of use, sometimes. I wish you were my own child, and there would be no occasion for it; but it is pride in this country turns the heads of the women and the men too. Your father and madame, they wish you to be the wife of a gentleman, and they do not think anybody else good enough for you; who is not some one, it is no use to think of. *C'est un mauvais système, bien mauvais*. But it is very true; and there is Mrs. Norris and your friend Emily, are they not trying all in the power of two silly women to make a young gentleman do that which it is not right he should? *Ce Monsieur Harcourt*, that he should marry M<sup>lle</sup>. is Madame Norris's *Paradis en perspective*, and for that she would sell herself to the devil! *Je vous demande pardon, mais toujours c'est vrai*; and does not she know that if he does marry Miss Emily, some of these days he will find out he has been *un imbécile*, and



hate her and her daughter too when it will be too late? *Les més-alliances ne réussissent jamais.*

"Now I will tell you why I say all this to you; it is because that *Madame votre mère* does not know what I do, nor *Monsieur votre père* neither, and you do not see your own danger, and that, my child, is what I wish to warn you of. Is it not so, that your parents think that Lord Stanmore will marry you, that you do not care in the least for him, and that you do care very much for Mr. d'Arcy? *Et lui—Est-ce que vous pensez qu'il vous épousera?*"

"No," answered Violet as steadily as she could; "no, he is above me, and I should not desire it."

"Ah! then why is Mr. d'Arcy always calling here? why is Mr. d'Arcy always at the Opera? why is he always talking to you? why does he follow you everywhere? why is he the *dévoué* of madame, your mamma? why is he, at two in the morning, to be standing with his white gloves, and his whispering words at your father's door, to hand you into your father's house? No, no, it is all bad. But the difference is, you are not in love with *Milord*, and with Mr. d'Arcy you are. And has he not found that out, or will he not do so? and then—*Oh, mais cela me fait horreur—N'importe*, I will say out to you what is the truth. When he asks you to be his mistress, what will you feel?"

Violet hid her face in her hands, while she almost screamed out, "Never, oh, never, never; Mr. d'Arcy never would; you do not know him, he is incapable, indeed he is."

"Eh, *y pensez-vous mon enfant?*" answered M. Dupas drily.

"But he is a man of honour!"

"Ah! *c'est selon*," replied her companion, shrugging his shoulders "*Il le croit, je n'en doute pas.* But he has fallen in love with you; he knows you are not of an equal rank with himself—he will not marry you, he *cannot*; but that, he says, *c'est votre affaire, et voilà pourquoi moi, moi, je me mêle de tout cela. Vous ne m'en voulez pas, ma douce enfant?*

"Oh, no," answered Violet, overcoming her emotion; "you have meant it well; but can you conceive it possible I could ever forget everything so as to become so degraded a creature? Oh, it is too horrible!"

“*Vous me méprenez,*” said M. Dupas; “if you think I can doubt the purity of my little Violet’s heart—no, not in the least; but the world is full of temptation. Yet that is not what I fear; no, I shall never live to see the little child—you, my little darling, that I have seen growing up, and that I have taught myself—I never shall see you disgraced, I am sure of it. But there it is; Mr. d’Arcy will find he can make you love him, but that he cannot make you wicked—*et alors il s’en ira*—and then will his heart or yours be the one to break;—his that is full of pride, though he does not think we see it:—with his *manières à l’eau sucrée* to Madame, *et les bouquets qu’il apporte*. Bah! *lui, il se consolera* with his fine ladies and his fine friends. *Et à vous,—reste le souvenir de ses belles paroles!* You will be unhappy, he will not—*ce n’est pas à savoir cela.*” And M. Dupas had again recourse to his snuff-box and to his shrug, while Violet sighed deeply.

At length she summoned courage to ask if he had any positive reason for thinking ill of D’Arcy. He shook his head, and replied ambiguously;—that he had lived long enough in the world to be wiser than she was; and that he had seen enough of Mr. d’Arcy to feel certain he was not a good acquaintance for Violet. He went on to say, that evil, in some way, was sure to result from her intimacy with him,—that the refinement of D’Arcy’s manners, and the outward polish of his affection, would prevent her ever being able to return that of a poorer, and more suitable admirer. Violet replied that the same objection might be made to so many other gentlemen who had made her acquaintance. “Yes; but it is not the same thing: as long as you do not care about them, it does not matter,—you don’t feel their advantages, and you do not value them. But Mr. D’Arcy’s? *en perdez-vous un seul?*”

In her heart, Violet could not deny the force of the argument, but it was one the least likely to make an useful impression. She could only promise to remember all M. Dupas had said,—she thanked him, and ventured to beg he would not alarm her parents on this point.

“*Soyez tranquille,*” said the old man. “But you I warn,—that your mother hopes Lord Stanmore will marry you, and that if he does not, Mr. d’Arcy will; and your father sees as Ma-

dame does, or, at least, acts as she desires he should, in every thing; *ce n'est pas être clairvoyant*," he added; "*mais c'est le défaut d'un cœur généreux.*"

It may be supposed that D'Arcy did not fail to call as he had told Violet, in their morning walk, he meant to do; and he chose the time when he felt certain of finding Mrs. Woodville at home, and less sure of finding Mr. Woodville. D'Arcy had ingratiated himself with the former; he had the art of pleasing where he desired to do so. He flattered her by his air of deference, and by his knowledge of the world, which had likewise enabled him to discover the vulnerable parts of her character. She was more anxious about, and desirous of Lord Stanmore's society, but there were no personal feelings blended with this solicitude. Lord Stanmore paid attention solely to her daughter; his civility was always reserved towards Mrs. Woodville, and nothing more, whereas D'Arcy had in some way enlisted her private sympathy in his favour.

To be sure, the Woodvilles never were in want of marks of attention from their friends. The day seldom passed without some such arrival as pine-apples from Lord X——; salmon from Mrs. C——; American apples, or a haunch of venison from B——, or A——; and endless tin boxes of violets, and bouquets of moss-roses for Mrs. and Miss W.; and, in the game season, their supplies of partridges, etc. were incessant: besides other sorts of birds with rare names, odd plumage, and lean bodies, which cooks think it felony not to send to table half raw. In short, none of the gallantries of this nature, which it was permitted to remember and to fulfill, were ever forgotten by the numerous admirers of the lovely Miss Woodville.

But to return to D'Arcy. He did not pay his visit alone this time; he requested permission to introduce an acquaintance who was passing that way with him. Violet remarked nothing more peculiar in D'Arcy's companion, than that he had not the usual tone of the men she was accustomed to, and that he never took his eyes from off her countenance; while she could not help fancying that she had before encountered his observation.

D'Arcy, meanwhile, was asking the Woodvilles to join a party to Richmond, for the following Sunday week. Mrs. Woodville

was nothing loth ; the rest of the party were not as yet fixed upon ; D'Arcy said it was to be very select ; and he had come in the first instance to ascertain if the day he had named would suit them.

While D'Arcy was in the house, another cabriolet drew up at the door, and Lord Stanmore entered the room. On seeing D'Arcy, he started slightly, and changed colour. If D'Arcy did the same, he was seated with his back to the light, and it was not observable.

Violet remained almost immovable from embarrassment, for she did not possess one grain of coquetry : if she had, the circumstance of two lovers paying their visits at the same time would have been to her only an agreeable disturbance.

There was a silence, which D'Arcy was the first to break. Lord Stanmore looked gravely at him while he spoke, and did not once address himself to him. A constrained sort of general conversation ensued. Lord Stanmore's countenance indicated an irritation which, by his manner, he made a poor attempt to conceal ; and now Mrs. Woodville began to feel uneasy. She would not, for the whole world, offend Lord Stanmore ; and she feared lest he should be jealous of D'Arcy,—that he had much cause to be so was a fact she was herself in ignorance of. Lord Stanmore rose suddenly to bid them good morning, and in the next minute his cabriolet was heard driving furiously from the door. D'Arcy and his acquaintance shortly after took their leave.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ Your objections are plausible, but surely they are not reasonable. The laws of society are strict in themselves, but there may be many instances in which, if the spirit of them is kept, it is more than sufficient. The world requires this sort of social government, which, individually, might often be dispensed with. I am hurt at the rigorous discipline you would impose, since it discovers your mistrust of me. The doctrines of a prude can never become yours, and you are too inartificial ever to feign to like them, while your understanding convinces you that they are unnecessary.”

So spoke D'Arcy, in answer to the refusal of Violet Woodville to meet him again in Kennington Gardens. She urged that, as

she was concealing her meetings with him, that alone rendered them objectionable; and that, in future, therefore, she trusted he would not join her. But D'Arcy replied with other arguments, and combated hers with all the sophistry he knew how to employ.

Violet felt it difficult to persevere in a resolution he treated as originating in a mistaken zeal of over-correctness, and she thought that, as he spoke, she detected a sneer on D'Arcy's lips, and that cold smile hovering there which she now so rarely beheld.

There was once, too, something like contempt in the tones of his voice, and the fear of offending him induced her, at length, to acquiesce in his reasoning. Violet began to think that he, at least, was sincere in the view he professed to take of the conduct she desired to pursue, and, if so, to adopt it would be unappreciated as well as displeasing.

"Il n'est pas de plus fort préjugé que celui qui est formé par l'amour."\*

And then again she was lulled by the flattering words of her adorer, and in listening to

"a voice where Passion shed  
All the deep sadness of her power,"

while he detailed the progress of his love, and descanted on the earnestness of his feelings, she alike forgot her danger and mistook her duty.

D'Arcy was an eloquent and a passionate lover, but it cannot be doubted that the force of his words gained additional strength by the inward acceptance they met with. An unacceptable lover might pour out his soul in the language Moore puts into the mouths of his angels, but it would fall unheeded on the ear of the indifferent listener.

"And so," said Emily one day to Violet, "it is clear enough you are in love with D'Arcy;" and Emily remained musing, apparently on the sense of her own words.

The habits of intimacy continued to prevail between Miss Wood-

\* *Mémoires du Marquis de Langallery.*

ville and her friend, and the faults of the latter were not so glaring as to have much deteriorated their mutual friendship: besides, there was a certain talent about Emily, which had its charm with men and with women too. She was quick, and she was too young and prosperous to be under the guidance of very bad feelings.

It was a relief to the conscience of Violet when she had told Emily of her walks with D'Arcy, and had expressed her own sense of error.

"I am not so sure that you are wrong," replied Emily. "If you like him better than Lord Stanmore, I should certainly show him that I did. There is not time to be thinking always of what is so exactly right or so exactly wrong. There is no harm, that I can see, in your meeting D'Arcy when you are out walking; after all, you are chaperoned, there is that ugly old Hummings with you. It is very natural, I am sure. If he loves you, he must have a thousand things to say to you which he can seldom have so good an opportunity of speaking otherwise; and there is something,—do you know, Violet?—there is something I rather like about Mr. d'Arcy."

"There can be no doubt of my having done wrong, Emily," said Violet, with a sigh, and not alluding to Emily's last sentence; "my father would say so."

"I dare say he would; but, poor man, you must not mind that. As your father, you know he is in some sort, bound to see you don't have lovers, and that sort of thing, too much; but there would be no pleasure in life if you were only to do what other people choose instead of what you choose yourself,—and parents don't understand. You are a nice girl, Violet, and I will answer for your always knowing what you are about"

"Ah, Emily, that's the way you always reason; and my father and mamma, too, are so kind,—and I have actually begun to have a concealment from them!"

At night, when Violet was going to bed, Mrs. Hummings entered her room and placed a letter in her hand. She said it had been brought by a person, who desired her to give it to Miss Woodville when she was alone. Mrs. Hummings did not add that she was also paid for undertaking to do so. She suspected the letter came from D'Arcy, and her conscience was not much

disturbed at being the channel of such a communication, as she argued that if her young mistress could take a walk with that gentleman in the morning, it could not do much harm if she read a letter from him in the evening. Mrs. Hummings, however, was mistaken: the letter was not from D'Arcy, but from Lord Stanmore.

It contained a passionate declaration of love to Violet, and ended by making her the most splendid offers of a disgraceful kind; but the letter was worded with the greatest delicacy, and with all the endeavour not to wound which such a proposition would admit of. It concluded thus: "If what I have written avails me not, and if the pleadings of a very devoted heart are spurned by you, —while you censure me, consider that I am not more to blame than a thousand others; nay less, inasmuch as, having a consciousness how greatly I should appreciate the sacrifice you would make for me, I should feel bound to treat with a lasting tenderness the object of an affection so rewarded."

With indescribable anguish Violet threw down the letter. "And this, then," she exclaimed, "is all they think me worthy of. They profess to love, but hesitate not to insult me!"

She at first determined to make no answer, but, on reading over the epistle a second time, something in the spirit of it moved her to think differently. "He could not marry me, and in what he offers he is generous, most generous," thought Violet, humbly and despondingly; and a melancholy sense of humiliation stole over her. "It is not his fault. He does but think I may be one of the many, and he treats me accordingly. And D'Arcy,—if *he* should possibly think the same of me? Oh, I should go mad with horror. But *he* knows me. *He* respects me; *he* will not insult me—never—I am sure of that."

Violet seized a pen, and answered Lord Stanmore:—

"MY LORD,—I cannot accept your offer. If you knew the cruel humiliation I have suffered in receiving a letter like yours, you would, I trust, have spared me.

"I am, my Lord,

"Yours sincerely and humbly,

"V. W."

Such was the reply of our heroine to Lord Stanmore, while

she continued to meet d'Arcy nearly every morning in the Gardens. She received another letter from Lord Stanmore: it was laconic:—

“Forgive me.”

“Go with me to the rehearsal to-morrow, will you?” said Emily Norris to her friend one morning. “We are going to try over *Le faux Cupidon*; I have nearly forgotten it.” Violet agreed to go, and told D'Arcy of her intention; he, of course, did not fail to join her on the stage at the time she went there. Violet was with Mrs. Norris, and it so happened that neither her father nor mother accompanied her.

“I had some difficulty in getting here,” said D'Arcy, laughing, and apparently in higher spirits than usual, as he took his post next Violet, who was leaning against one of the side boxes.

“How do you do, Mr. d'Arcy?” said a young lady, in a free and easy tone, in flesh-coloured silk stockings, a pair of corsets, and wearing about one petticoat and a half,—and holding out her hand familiarly to D'Arcy.

*Vous avez chaud, apparemment, ma chère;*” said a gentleman, interrupting her, whose costume consisted of yellow slippers and white-cotton trowsers, with a pink silk handkerchief knotted round his throat.

“Get away,—you are jealous,” cried D'Arcy's young lady.

“Pray let me give no cause for anxiety,” said D'Arcy, moving away from the fair one and her friend.

“Come,—come,—so you won't speak to me to-day?” said the nymph, following our hero round the stage very closely. “I see you like that new Miss, there. Why she is not half so good as I, and she is proud, and you know I am not. Have done, Nicolas! why do you follow me so? You never let me speak to anyone!”

“*Vous êtes une perfide,*” whispered Nicolas, the gentleman in white cotton; “*et je vous le payerai,*” he added, making a most ferocious pair of eyes.

The lady replied by a laugh; and, following D'Arcy to the back of the stage, tried to take his arm. “Get away,” cried D'Arcy, impatiently.

“Bless me,” said the nymph, in surprise, real or apparent.—“Well, I see you don't want me; you ungrateful—you—”



"*Allons, commençons,*" called a voice from the other end, and D'Arcy was liberated.

Violet could not help seeing what had passed; she knew the girl to be one of the figurantes, and one not of good character. She saw her, and others of her sort, often enough addressed by gentlemen, but this creature's familiar tone of speaking to D'Arcy shocked her particularly.

Mrs. Norris had taken a chair apart from all the other mammas and chaperones, and Violet screened herself behind her, to avoid associating, as much as possible, with her present set of acquaintance.

"*N'est-ce pas que ma Julie a des jambes superbes ?*" said a respectable-looking old lady, with an air of modesty, to Mrs. Norris, who was forced to put up her glass to survey the said "*jambes*" of Mdlle. Julie, while D'Arcy once more approached, to resume his station by Violet; but this time he was attacked by the same old lady who spoke to Mrs. Norris. "*N'est-ce pas,*" said she, looking up benevolently in his face, "*N'est-ce pas, Monsieur, que ma Julie est une brave fille ?*"

"Is it not dreadful the sort of people one is obliged to be civil to, Mr. d'Arcy?" Mrs. Norris pathetically asked; "for my part, I have a perfect horror of these sort of persons; I never speak to them unless I am absolutely forced."

"You seem bored," said D'Arcy, addressing Violet.

"I never like this place."

"And why, loveliest?"

Violet shrank from D'Arcy, almost for the first time in her life, for there was a levity in his tone she had never before detected.

"*Dois-je commencer avec le commencement ?*" called the fiddler. "*Oui,*" said Miss Norris, imperiously, while she began an arduous pirouette. About five bars were played over once again, while Nicolas, in the back ground, seemed exerting himself to perfect an elaborate battement with one ill-humoured leg.

"Listen to me, my soul's idol," said D'Arcy; "why are you so unkind to me this morning?"

"I am not unkind, Mr. d'Arcy."

"Yes, you are;—what have I done? tell me."

"Believe me when I say,—nothing."

At this moment D'Arcy's eye fell upon one of the side boxes : it was Lord Stanmore's, and in it, even by the imperfect lights of a rehearsal, D'Arcy saw Lord Stanmore himself. He was looking gloomily at Violet, and at his friend ; Violet's attention was at the same moment drawn to him, and Lord Stanmore, seeing he was observed, quitted the box. Violet shuddered. "How great must be his contempt for me!" thought she ; "and I merit it."

D'Arcy saw that her spirit was not at ease. "Her self-love is hurt," thought he, and he applied himself to dissipate the cloud, and he succeeded. He had some difficulty, however, in getting her to promise to meet him the next morning ; this was not the first time she had resisted.

"Well," at length said D'Arcy, "for this once more you must meet me,—I have a reason for it. I have a picture I want you to see, and you must meet me to-morrow, that I may show it to you."

The next morning, when Violet walked out to meet her lover, she was oppressed with a sense of doing wrong, and fully determined that it should afflict her for the last time ; this, she resolved, should be effectually done by giving up her morning walks. She thought of what the future would then be, and it seemed a blank before her.

As it was only exposing herself to additional temptation, Violet wisely determined to say nothing about her resolve to D'Arcy, but her heart was sadder than she had ever felt it in her whole life.

"Look here," said D'Arcy, on joining her, "do you recognise this face?" showing her a small and beautifully painted miniature of a young girl in a morning out-of-doors dress. Violet started ; it was herself in the attire she usually wore when she went out.

"How could you get this?" she inquired with surprise.

"I have had so great a desire to possess a good likeness of you, and I have so often regretted," continued D'Arcy, "that I could not ask you to sit for one. But, I believe, I have at last succeeded wonderfully in obtaining this. I met with a clever artist, to whom I gave every opportunity of seeing you that I could think of. You must have passed him constantly of a morning when you have been coming here ; he has been hovering on your steps for the last two months, and I seldom allowed a day to pass

without paying a visit to the *atelier* of my artist friend, for such he has been to me. You may suppose that my corrections have done something towards the likeness. I brought him to your house the other day, too, and introduced him as an acquaintance who was walking with me."

"Good heavens?" said Violet, "so then that was the man who never took his eyes off me, and I really wondered what he could be looking at."

"His admiration of you was profound," said D'Arcy, "and to that I chiefly attribute the great success of my miniature. While I live I shall never part with it. You see I have had it made small on purpose, and the little gold case is the neatest in the world. I shall hang it round my neck,—here is the chain I shall put to it, and a ribbon also, for fear the chain should break."

"I hardly knew you cared so much for me as all that," said Violet, touched.

"Alas!" cried D'Arcy, with sudden emotion, "I wish that I had it more in my power to prove the excess of my affection."

"Allow me to say," said Violet, with agitation, "that I am quite aware I never can receive any further proofs of your affection for me. I am so aware of this," she continued, "that it would hurt me if you could imagine I should expect it: our situations in life are perfectly different, and to break through the restraints they impose would be a lasting error which I feel, were I in your place, I could not commit. I believe I am speaking with a frankness which is uncalled for, but you will not think it boldness."

"I understand you," answered D'Arcy, "and I admire you the more for what you have said. I will be sincere with you,—I once promised that I always would be. I cannot think of marrying,—my position in life is one that will not admit of it. Had I the largest fortune to-morrow, however, I should not marry, or if I did——"

D'Arcy paused and sighed. "I cannot say that I should not marry in that case,—but there is but one person I would ask to be my wife."

"And who would be that person, Mr. d'Arcy?"

"Yourself."

"Never," cried Violet, "never!—how can you so try to deceive me? nothing would induce you to marry an opera-dancer!"

"What can make you think so?" asked D'Arcy with surprise.

Violet related the conversation she had so long ago overheard between him and Mr. Harcourt.

"But still you underrate my great love for you," said D'Arcy : "it could lead me to overcome every prejudice."

"It *could*, but it *would not*," repeated Violet, steadily.

"You may be right," answered D'Arcy, after a moment's reflection. "But yet it is true that I have never once exaggerated the strength of my affection in all I have told you; more than that (believe me or not, as you choose), but there have been moments when I have endured the most poignant regret—regret?—yes, I have upbraided myself; but I do love you, may God bear witness, better than all things that are,—and I would give worlds—what am I saying?—oh, my very soul,—I would give it away, if—"

"You hesitate; I do not know what you are going to say, but leave it unsaid. I am unhappy enough as it is—so unhappy,—I see that I can never know happiness again,"—and Violet Woodville clasped her hands in deep sorrow; D'Arcy seized, and covered them with kisses,—while he almost knelt at her feet.

Humming was a great way behind, but she hastened her pace now, and her approaching steps induced both Miss Woodville and D'Arcy to try to recover their composure.

Violet's determination of not meeting D'Arcy again was preying upon her mind, and she had the tenderness of her heart, as well as the deepness of its affection, to struggle with.

They came to the end of her usual walk in silence, and when Violet gave D'Arcy her hand to bid him farewell, her heart was too full to speak.

"I shall meet you at the Opera to-morrow; Mrs. Woodville told me she was going with you, but to-morrow morning we will talk of that: you will come here to-morrow morning?" whispered D'Arcy in an imploring voice: "ah, dearest, you will believe my very life is in your hands."

Violet could make no reply. When she was alone, her tears flowed long, and how sadly!

“ Nos actions ne peuvent être appréciées par leur valeur intrinsèque non connue. La position qui les met au jour en décide le prix.”\*

\* Madame de Staal de Launay.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

A savage jealousy that sometimes savours nobly.

TWELFTH NIGHT.

Oh, what a host of killing doubts and fears,  
Of melancholy musings, deep perplexities,  
Must the fond heart that yields itself to love  
Struggle with, and endure !

LORD STANMORE went to Brighton, but, finding his mother really better than he had expected, he returned to town. It was, in some measure, curiosity that prompted him to do this, mingled with more unpleasant feelings. He was certain that the impression he once hoped to have made on Violet Woodville was at an end; at the same time he gave full credit to her upright mind; but he found he had a rival, and the observations of a week were sufficient to enable him to discover who that rival was. In his jealous anger, Lord Stanmore vowed never again to see D'Arcy. He avoided him therefore, for he felt he hated him. It was a chance thing his seeing him and Violet at the rehearsal: he sometimes went to the rehearsal of an Opera, and a mistake as to the nature of this one was the reason of his coming to his box on the morning in question; and it was a moment of great pain when he there beheld Violet and his former friend.

He could have declared to all the world his conviction of Violet's hypocritical conduct, although, in fact, he refused to give it his own credence.

“ Les amants portent quelquefois leur aveuglement jusqu'à ne pas connaître dans leurs maitresses les défauts qu'ils savent bien en faire connaître aux autres.\*”

On the last night of the Opera the Woodvilles took a box, or rather the manager very civilly gave them one; and Mrs. Woodville, without saying a word to Mr. Woodville or Violet, wrote a note to Lord Stanmore to inform him where they were going. Her excuse was, that he had once said something of her letting him know if they went to the Opera; and without this little arrangement on her part, Mrs. Woodville would have looked on the operabox as a most vain acquirement.

A sudden resolution prompted Lord Stanmore to avail himself of this information, or rather invitation. The overture was only just ended when, to the great surprise of Violet Woodville, he entered the box and seated himself by her. She was in the back, where her mother had placed her, because she thought, in case Lord Stanmore chose it, it would be giving him such a good opportunity of proposing to her. Poor Violet was thinking only of D'Arcy and cared little where she sat.

The words of civility were no sooner passed and the Opera begun, than Lord Stanmore ( his jealousy overcoming his embarrassment at seeing Violet after the letter he had lately written to her, and her reply ) began to upbraid her for her preference of D'Arcy, which, he said, was undisguised.

This language was not well received; and, with woman's pique at being scolded by a lover she did not love, Miss Woodville answered, that there were others, and not himself, who were the best judges of her conduct, and had the best right to interfere in it. Thrown off his guard by this rebuke, Lord Stanmore exclaimed, “ And is it possible you can think of being the slave of D'Arcy, who, at the very moment he is professing love to you, is thoroughly involved with another woman? I care not if you tell him I told you this — nothing signifies now to me. But of him I

\* St. Evremond.

warn you. He has no heart to give, and of you he is utterly unworthy."

Violet felt sick at heart when Lord Stanmore pronounced these words. "Of whom are you speaking?" she asked with a tremulous voice; "with whom is he, Mr. d'Arcy, involved?"

"Names cannot matter to you, you will not suspect me of an untruth; what I have said I would have said in D'Arcy's presence—he could not have denied it."

"But why, then, is he your friend—a person you think so ill of?"

"The person who is perfectly fit to be my friend, may be most unfit to become yours."

"I have nothing further to reply to your remarks, my Lord," said Violet Woodville, almost passionately. For a moment her usual gentleness was overset by the anger as well as the bitterness of her feelings.

"I am prepared to meet your coldness," continued Lord Stanmore; "but it shall not hinder me from telling you that I see you ready to sacrifice everything—yes, everything, in time, I have no doubt—and to D'Arcy. I may be led away by the jealousy which you have so fearlessly caused me, and it may be true that I have no right to interfere; but I think the very force of my attachment to you gives me that right, as it does the power, certainly. If you knew how much I have thought of you! God forgive me! if, even while I watched over the sick bed of my mother, I remembered you as a consoling angel! With you to have fled from the world, to have seen you as my wife, to have owned it, and to have been proud of it! These *have been* my visions at moments when I thought your heart might be truly mine. And then D'Arcy came, and he has worked the ruin of every hope I ever formed!—Villain!"

"Say not that," cried Violet; "Mr. d'Arcy has done you no harm; he has never spoken to me against you, as you have done against him this night."

"Ah! I see you cannot forgive me for the truths I have told you. How you must love that man! I wish he was dead?" said Lord Stanmore, bitterly: "I abhor him!"

"You are horribly unjust, and you terrify me."

"Do I? I beg your pardon—but you forget that he *was* my



friend ; and I did not think this wretchedness would have been occasioned me by him."

" If Mr. d'Arcy knew it, he would be sorry, I am sure. "

" Sorry!—oh, no, that's not likely. I, his friend!" continued Lord Stanmore, incoherently : " the baseness—to dare——again I beg your pardon ; I cannot help my own violence : you have no conception of what I am enduring ; you would forgive me, if you knew how I loved you — how I have cursed myself for that odious letter I sent you ; what I would have given, if it had never been written — and you hate me for that more than ever, do you not ?"

" I never hated you, Lord Stanmore."

" *Now* you are lost, " he continued, without heeding her reply. " You could not, if you would, give me back the heart which is D'Arcy's ; but, " he added, in a voice of deeper feeling, " do not destroy every illusion — do not become a guilty thing—let not even D'Arcy teach you that ; love *him*, if you will — make him your god, and lavish upon him the whole treasure of your first affection — die for him — let your heart be the bruised token of his power : cherish him while you live — pray for him when you are dying — but, oh ! allow him not to bring you to dishonour!"

Lord Stanmore's words became hardly audible, while he went on speaking with great emotion.

" From this degradation, let my prayers preserve you ! Spare me that — not for the sake of the good will you bear me, but for your own. You do not know what vice is. It is your very ignorance which has made you so beautiful in my eyes ; and I do think that, were I to see you debased, I could never believe in woman's purity again. Would that you had never known D'Arcy!—and shall I live too see you his victim ? Surely Heaven never made you to become the child of sin ; or, if it did, it would blast a portion of its very self. I could immolate to shame every created thing — I could believe in an angel's fall, but not in yours!"

Lord Stanmore ceased. Pale and tremulous, Violet had listened to each word ; terrified at his vehemence, and filled with nervous dread, she yet, more than all, remembered the assurance

that D'Arcy was devoted to another. Overcome, at length, with the extremity of agitation, she suddenly leaned towards her mother, and drooped her head upon her shoulder. Lord Stanmore had not seemed to observe her; and, as if he hardly knew what he was about, he rose, without looking towards her, and left the box.

The two senior Woodvilles had been sitting as much to the front as possible, during this conversation; and, besides listening to the music, Mrs. Woodville had contrived to carry on a constant dialogue with her *sposo*. Once only she ventured to look round at her daughter with the mere tail of one eye; but, seeing how much Violet was apparently engaged, she determined nothing should induce her to commit the like imprudence again, and in that direction she took special care that poor Woodville should neither see nor hear at all.

It was a loud opera; and, as Lord Stanmore spoke very low, it may easily be imagined that his conversation passed unheard.

Mrs. Woodville's reflections, in the meantime, were very similar to those of the maid with the milk-pail, in the fable; and *its* overthrow could not have dashed that damsel's projects more completely than were Mrs. Woodville's, when she beheld her child's pale face reclining on her shoulder, and, at the same moment, saw Lord Stanmore retreating from the box. Consternation seized the parents; and, in their alarm for their only child, they thought but of restoring her.

Violet had not fainted; but she earnestly expressed her desire to return home.

"Oh, perhaps Lord Stanmore is gone to see for our coach?" said Mr. Woodville, looking round. "Did you tell him, my darling, that you wished to go?"

"No, father; but do you see for it."

At this instant the box again opened, and it was to admit Mr. d'Arcy and Mr. Brown.

Mr. Brown was a vocalist, smitten with Miss Woodville, and, having met D'Arcy on the grand staircase, it occurred to him that if that gentleman were going to visit the Woodvilles, he, Mr. Brown, had as good a right to go likewise; and he determined to take the opportunity as well, deeming it expedient also to scrape

acquaintance with Mr. d'Arcy, so as occasionally to seem to belong to him.

D'Arcy was much astonished when he beheld the drooping Violet, leaning on her mother's shoulder; but he was still more so when, on speaking to her, he received no answer, and she closed her eyes.

"A little air,—more salts,—eau de Cologne!" cried Mr. Brown, "if Miss Woodville would take a little more salts to smell?" and he appealed to D'Arcy, who surveyed him for the first time with something between contempt and curiosity.

"Violet's quite ill, Mr. d'Arcy," said Woodville, "so I am to see for our coach, and perhaps you and Mr. Brown will have the goodness to take care of them while I am gone."

"Could you take an arm, Violet, and go down stairs?" inquired her mother; "and then we shall be ready." Violet answered in the affirmative, and D'Arcy proffered her his aid, but it was rejected in silence; and Mr. Brown stepped forward to offer his.

"I shall only lean upon mamma," said Violet, and she did as she said, while Mrs. Woodville availed *herself* of D'Arcy's assistance. As they moved on, he inquired the cause of her daughter's indisposition.

"Indeed I do not know," answered Mrs. Woodville; "she was talking too much, and over-exerting herself, I think. But you are much better now, Violet, an't you?"

Violet answered, "Yes," in a more restored voice, and added, "I could even go back to the Opera, if you wished it, mamma."

D'Arcy looked at Violet, and tried to penetrate the cause of her changed manner. In vain he sought to meet her eye, or to induce her to speak to him. The carriage was now ready: her father now hastened to inform them; and, as an excuse for helping Violet into it, D'Arcy seized her hand, but it was eagerly withdrawn; and he saw the Woodville equipage disappear,—while he remained standing on the pavement, in astonishment at this novel conduct on the part of Violet.

"The heat of the house overcame her, I am inclined to imagine,"

said Mr. Brown, with a facetious air, and addressing himself to D'Arcy.

"Sir !" said D'Arcy, staring at him,— "Yes;" and he walked away, leaving Mr. Brown to comfort his *amour propre*, by muttering, "Vulgar manners, I think, upon my word !"

As for Violet, she remained in an agony of mind. Much as there was to annoy her, she would not have suffered so deeply, if our feelings could ever be disturbed in proportion to their real cause, rather than to the way in which we view that cause.

She was stung to the quick by every word Lord Stanmore had uttered. She could not bear his foreseeing her degradation as a thing possible,—and might not the supposition (she asked herself, as she had done before) occur to D'Arcy ? This was worse still; what woman would not rather be thought ill of by all the world, than that a lover should dream she could live to err ?

Then she remembered Lord Stanmore's assurances, that D'Arcy's heart was already engaged; and when she gave way to this reflection, her misery was inconceivable. Not only was she wounded by the fact, but the deceit of her lover affected her still more powerfully.

We are so unwilling to confess the faults of any one we love; and this night, for the first time in her life, Violet learnt, that "*la disgrazia di non piangere e una delle piu crudeli ne' sommi dolori*." Her grief too partook of a violence that hardly accorded with her character.

"Il est de fait que les amants se montrent plus impitoyables les uns envers les autres que les ennemis les plus irréconciliables."

And upon this true observation her sensations may be best understood.

Violet of course, resolved never to speak to D'Arcy again. At one moment she determined to write to him, to inform him of everything Lord Stanmore had said, and to express the height of her contempt. Sometimes she thought she would supplicate him herself to tell her the truth; for, despite of all her anger, Violet involuntarily felt that if D'Arcy were to deny every word, she should believe him. She took up her pen and composed her let-

ter; but when she read it over the next morning, her good sense pointed out to her the imprudence, or perhaps the indelicacy, of sending it to him.

She was in hopes all day long that D'Arcy would call, that she might show him she never meant to speak to him again, by leaving the room the moment he entered it; but D'Arcy did not call.

To her parents, Violet assigned no reason for her illness at the Opera, and professed herself unable to account for Lord Stanmore's sudden departure from their box.

"Some lover's quarrel, I am sure," said Mrs. Woodville to her husband, "that will all come right again, but we must have patience. I own I am disappointed, for I declare I thought the young man was going to propose; did not you, Charles?"

"Indeed I do not know why you thought any such thing," replied Mr. Woodville; all I know is, I wish something or other was settled. Dupas was talking to me about it yesterday. He says, what's very true, these young men don't think of marrying,—all they think of is amusement. There's young Brown,—only you won't be civil to him,—why should not Violet marry him? he is a very proper sort of person; and I know his uncle has made money. With him one might know where one is; but as for all these dandies, they drive me out of my wits. Don't I see that D'Arcy flying about the girl, and making a fool of you besides, for it's the truth; and whispering, and following us wherever we go,—and humbugging me, I am ashamed to say, almost as bad as he does you, for I never know what he would be at, he is so cunning about it all; and to us he is as if butter would not melt in his mouth, notwithstanding he looks as if he were the Grand Turk."

"Oh, Mr. Woodville, you know you have always had a prejudice against Mr. d'Arcy; I am sure he is a very good-looking —"

"Good-looking!—yes, I dare say; that's always the way with a woman. What do his looks signify to me? Good-looking!—that makes a great deal of difference, I suppose! and are we all to act like fools, because a man is good-looking?"

"Bless me! Mr. Woodville, don't be so cross."

"I am not cross, Mrs. Woodville: you should not provoke me by saying a man's good-looking: what's that to me? It is not

that I have any malice against Mr. d'Arcy—I will be hanged if I ever know exactly what I think of him; and it is certain, so far, he is like a thorough gentleman to me. But he is always here, and that other one is just as bad—just : he does not ask my consent to marry my daughter; and if he ever meant it, why does not he? What's to hinder him—he is of age, and his own master."

"I never knew anything like your unreasonableness : you speak as if you hadn't two grains of sense, sometimes; you would spoil everything by your impatience; and as for Brown—I would not, upon any account, that any body thought that Violet was dreaming of condescending to him !"

"She may come to worse condescensions than that, Mrs. Woodville."

"I don't know what you are meaning to insinuate against your own child," replied the lady, indignantly.

"I am not insinuating anything : as for Lord Stanmore, that I don't say so much about; there might have been a chance of getting him—he had only to do as he chose; and when a young man gets his head full of love, he will do a good deal."

"Well, and pray why shouldn't Mr. d'Arcy want to marry Violet, supposing Lord Stanmore does not ?"

"That's just your uncommon folly ! — I cannot help calling it so; you put me out of patience with so much nonsense. Now, I should like to know what you see in Mr. d'Arcy's face to make you think he will marry my daughter ?"

"Why shouldn't he as soon as his friend Lord Stanmore, pray ?"

"In the first place, he has no money; and, in the second place, he is not a man that would lower himself so far, if Violet was as beautiful as a saint—or I am much mistaken."

"No money !—how are you sure he has no money ?"

"Because I have heard it of those that are likely to know."

"It does not matter," continued Mrs. Woodville; "he belongs to great people; and who knows what he may not be some of these days?—besides, he is always a gentleman."

"Yes, there you are again ! I know who fills you up with this nonsense; but I am not a man that finds fault when there is no occasion. Mrs. Norris may do as she likes; but the end of Miss Emily is not seen yet. I won't have the respectability of my family

endangered—other people may do as they please; but I will have a little better order kept in my house; gentlemen shall not be coming in at all hours of the day: and I beg, in future, Violet may be taught to think of those, in a becoming manner, who properly ought to think of her.—Violet is ill. Do you think I don't see that, between them, these lovers of hers have been worrying her to death? They are all of them an unprincipled set of young rascals; and I have opened my eyes to see the mischief of what they are doing to me and mine."

"You are in a bad humour, Charles," said Mrs. Woodville, in a mitigated tone; "and I shan't say any more to you now; it is of no use."

"No, it is not; so don't say any more—only please to remember what I have told you, and to mind it, that's all."

Violet continually expected that D'Arcy would call; he could do so very easily, she thought, as there was the excuse of inquiring after her; but the day passed, and D'Arcy had never been.

"Humblings," said Violet, when she went to bed, "has no one called?"

"No gentleman, Miss; but Mr. d'Arcy's servant was here, to leave his master's card, and to inquire how you was?"

"But then, Humblings, Mr. d'Arcy was in his cabriolet, and his servant came to the door?"

"No, Miss, he warn't, for there wasn't no cab. I looked, to see if Mr. d'Arcy himself was a-nigh the house, but his young man walked on of himself, till he turned the corner."

Violet wondered why D'Arcy had not called; there could be no doubt he would yet do it, however, she argued—and another day dawned, and with it her expectation of seeing him. She longed so to show him her displeasure—to convince him that she never would forgive his perfidy—for perfidious she considered him ever since Lord Stanmore talked of his heart being another's. Alas! and the remembrance of those words occasioned her the tears—they were such heart-felt ones; but another day passed, and D'Arcy came not.

Violet paid a visit to Emily Norris, *pour se désennuyer*.

"Well, I do wonder you have not seen Mr. d'Arcy," said Emily, when Violet had told all of her present grief that she had to tell.

"But, good heavens! it quite shocks me to think how silly you have been behaving; why you might have married Lord Stanmore, Violet!"

"Oh, never mind that, Emily, it is only Mr. d'Arcy that I care about."

"Yes; how much you are in love with him! I will tell you what, Violet;—I will ask Harcourt about him,—not so as to betray you, leave that to me; I shall see him to-morrow,—we are great friends just now; so don't fret any more. Mr. d'Arcy is ill, or engaged, or gone to the country for a few days,—you will see; or, perhaps, he is only playing sulky, for you know, though you had cause to be angry, D'Arcy could not guess that anything so unlikely should have happened as Lord Stanmore telling you what he did; and he must have thought your conduct very odd, and very unaccountable."

Emily was as good as her word in making some inquiries of her admirer. In consequence, on the first occasion that he met with, Mr. Harcourt addressed D'Arcy, by saying—

"D'Arcy, may I ask if you are still in love with that Miss Woodville?"

"To be sure I am."

"That's being very constant, for you; but I want to know why you have not been near her lately?"

"So, Miss Norris has desired you to ask these questions, eh, Harcourt?"

"Why, yes—she has. She said—(You know the Woodvilles and Mrs. Norris are great friends,) and Emily said she was sure that pretty little sylph, the girl, was worried to death about something, and that she knew you had not been about the Woodvilles lately, and she asked me what was the reason, or if you were in town. Now what have you been at?"

"On my word, nothing; but," added D'Arcy, with his frequent sneer, "I am not a marrying man,—you are, I believe;—and the poor Woodvilles are too good for me."

"Ah, then I understand you. You have been an unsuccessful suitor, and the little creature will not be your mistress?"

"I own to you, I never ventured to ask her."

"Why, D'Arcy," said Harcourt, opening his eyes, and rousing



himself from his usual nonchalant manner,—"Why, D'Arcy, you don't say so? You will never make me believe that."

"I didn't see why, — after all, I am such a very modest fellow."

"I did not know it, and neither do other people."

"I assure you it is true; Harcourt; and it is very often the greatest disadvantage to my advancement in life. I have the humblest opinion of myself; I would give anything for the assurance of Goring, of D—, or of C—," continued D'Arcy.

"And so you have given up the poor girl?" Mr. Harcourt continued.

"Rather say, she has given me up."

"You know Stanmore is gone back to Brighton, so he will not stand in your way."

D'Arcy's countenance looked somewhat bitter, and his lip curled into an icy sneer,—*his* sneer, as he haughtily replied, although addressing his friend Harcourt,—

"As she is neither his wife nor his mistress, Stanmore's presence or his absence, I presume, must be a matter of indifference to me."

"And how, all this time, are you going on with your other lady?"

"Much as I have always done; and my humble disposition has stood in my way there likewise."

"Ah, I don't understand you," said Harcourt, at length. "I wanted to consult you about Emily, but I don't like your mystifications to-day; however, if you like, you shall go shares with me in a thing I am to be let into in Casselford's stable. I am going to-night to the One Tun, in Jermyn-street,—if you choose to accompany me, we will talk it over; and I will own to you I am not sorry you have not made a prey of that Woodville girl, for she is Emily's great friend, and it would have shocked her so. Have you seen Mrs. Skiffney?"

"No."

"Then go to the Haymarket to-morrow;—we will all go. I should like to hear your opinion: 'pon my soul I think her head and shoulders the finest thing I ever beheld."

"Is she good?"

"Very; just the thing for you. So you have not seen Mrs. Skiffney!"

"I have had so much to do lately, and am so bored about my place under government. But we will certainly go to the Haymarket to-morrow, and see this new launch you tell me of."

"Ah, it will do you good, D'Arcy," said Mr. Harcourt, affectionately; "for you are looking horribly bilious."

Emily Norris, as has already been said, partly from friendship, and partly from curiosity, tried to discover, through Mr. Harcourt, to whom Lord Stanmore could have alluded when he spoke of D'Arcy's divided heart. But her efforts were unsuccessful, Harcourt either did not know, or would not tell; perhaps he had no idea of betraying D'Arcy.

"I wonder how you can like Mr. d'Arcy?" said Emily, inquiringly; "he is half inclined to be disagreeable."

"My beloved, he is the cleverest fellow in the world."

"But I believe you are all afraid of him."

"I vow I think we are, sometimes, now you have put it into my head."

"What does he do? Is he rich?"

"They say he lost upon the Derby last year?"

"I saw him once, myself, talking to a lady in Grosvenor-square. She looked handsome, and wore a hat made of blonde, and I remembered the shape of it at the time; I and mamma were passing at that moment. Is Mr. d'Arcy in love with some lady in Grosvenor-square?"

"If he is, he does not tell me; but he is always in love with a hundred women at a time; he never cares for any of them, he throws them over, and then he affects that they ill-use him. Your little friend had better keep out of his way. Besides which, I do not think he cares for her; and he is going abroad shortly. Where's Mrs. Norris?"

"Mamma is writing a letter she says must go by the post," said Emily, laughing; and in five minutes more Mrs. Norris entered the room, lamenting she had not been able to come sooner; for she said, "though I am not a foolish prude, Mr. Harcourt, I never like to brave prejudices; and as young ladies are in the habit of having a chaperone, I always try to be with Emily when she sees gentle-

men; however, I left the door wide open, and that's much the same thing, is not it?" continued the excellent Mrs. Norris, with a complacent smile.

Emily Norris faithfully reported to Violet the substance of all she ever could extract from Mr. Harcourt about D'Arcy.

"He allowed to me," said Emily, "he met D'Arcy, and had asked him why he had not seen you lately, but that he got no answer from him; and I have tried since then to find out what sort of person Mr. d'Arcy was, and I asked if he was a roué, but Harcourt only answered in his usual way—you know his way—he is so indolent sometimes."

"No, I never heard him called a roué; in short, Harcourt seemed stupid about it, or else it was his indolence. I wish you would forget D'Arcy."

"Impossible! my dear Emily, all I wish is, to see him once more, only once. I only want to tell him all I now think of him, and that I forgive him, and that I never wish to see him again!" answered Violet, sighing profoundly.

"He would tell you you were very foolish, and begin making love all over again."

"He could not; I should convince him that I knew every word he said was false, and that I was acquainted with his affection for another person."

"Which, of course, he would deny."

"No; he could not tell an untruth."

"Nonsense! as if he would think *that* an untruth."

"D'Arcy would not tell a falsehood," persisted Violet Woodville, while the tears rose to her eyes.

Poor Violet! The days passed heavily now, and everything seemed changed. As long as we are in love, or rather, I should say, during the intervals that our love runs smoothly—few they are, few and far between—but during these intervals, the presence of the adored one is as the sun of our day; and its influence is still felt, and its beneficence shed upon every other object with which we come in contact.

Those who are in love, and who go on for awhile happily, live entirely in a world of their own; much that was of importance becomes a matter of indifference to them; they rejoice in a fine day

without knowing it, and when a rainy one comes, they do not perceive it; everything with them is *couleur de rose*, and they never guess that the hour of trouble is but deferred, and that they are drinking then



"The cordial drop Heav'n in our cup has thrown  
To make the nauseous cup of life go down,  
On which one blessing God might raise,  
In hands of atheist, subsidies of praise."

LORD ROCHESTER.

But when some evil change occurs, and they are awakened from their dream, then indeed they think it has been one, and there is no saying how mournful a heart they bring to the gayest scenes, how broken a spirit reposes in that which should be the happiest home.

Violet Woodville was now undergoing all this, for two weeks had passed away and she had not seen or heard of D'Arcy. Emily Norris could tell her nothing more than that she believed him to be still in London, which Violet had begun to doubt. It was the month of August, and he might be gone into the country.

Over and over again she questioned herself as to the reasons for D'Arcy's total neglect of her. Sometimes she conceived that he had either guessed or ascertained all that Lord Stanmore had told her, and that he guiltily felt ashamed of meeting her. It was a *naïve* supposition, and if it recurred often it was as often discarded. Violet felt that this was not in accordance with what she knew of D'Arcy's character. He was not ill, since it was clear Mr. Harcourt would have said so to Emily. Then, all other supposititious excuses would be as nothing in the case of a true lover. Had he ceased to love? No, for that would happen gradually; and by means of that freemasonry which exists between lovers, notwithstanding her disdain towards him, Violet felt that very night at the Opera D'Arcy was as much engrossed by her as ever. Was it then possible that mere anger had induced him to stay away? But, thought Violet suddenly, but suppose I am wronging him altogether? but no; Lord Stanmore would never have stooped to deceit! no; yet he might possibly be mistaken: and then, if poor D'Arcy should be blameless!

Imagining that D'Arcy considered himself unfairly treated by her, Violet thought it was possible that indignation might make him refrain from seeing her. She did not know what the experienced could have told her, that it becomes more urgent with us to tell a once beloved object that we hate them, we trample upon them, we despise them, than it ever was before to declare how passionately we adored them.

The Woodvilles noticed the grief of their child, and could not divine its direct cause, whether it was owing to having quarrelled with Lord Stanmore, which she let them suppose was the case, or whether it was owing entirely to Mr. d'Arcy's absence. They often spoke of him, at least Mrs. Woodville did, and wondered why he never came; and Mrs. Woodville asked Violet if she had quarrelled with him likewise, for her behaviour to D'Arcy at the Opera had passed unnoticed by both her parents, on account of her illness. Only once, when she was alone, and Mr. Dupas asked, in his kindest voice, why she was unhappy, for he was sure she was so? and why had she given up all her admirers so suddenly? Violet replied that she did not know whether Mr. d'Arcy was in town;—"Do you think he is, M. Dupas?" The old man fixed upon Violet a glance of inquiry, but her pale cheeks and sunken eye denoted too plainly that she was unhappy, and that was an answer.

"You may trust me, *mon enfant*," he said, compassionately, "I am sorry for you. What is it you want to know about Mr. d'Arcy? Is it not at your desire he has left off coming to see you? I had hoped it was."

"No."

"How then?"

"I don't know," said Violet, listlessly; and, too unhappy even to discourse on the cause of her grief, she left the room.

Still the Woodvilles, *père et mère*, were very gay, and continually making Vauxhall parties, or going to Greenwich, or dining at Richmond, chiefly to procure diversion for Violet; at least so said Mrs. Woodville. Very often, on pretence of illness. Violet would excuse herself from joining these "pleasure parties," to use the phrasology of Mr. Brown, who continued to be most assiduous in making love,—no, I mean paying his addresses to

Miss Woodville,—who, poor girl! now absolutely sickened at the sight of him.

And here, as M. Dupas had predicted, was one evidence of her misfortune. Having once associated, and intimately, with a person of real refinement, she could not like those who possessed not the same advantages, and towards Brown, especially, there is no expressing the dislike Violet felt; and nothing but her sweetness of temper enabled her to disguise her contempt under the garb of cold civility.

Mr. Brown was not repulsed, as he might have been, by Violet Woodville's dislike to him, because he did not conceive it possible. He looked in the glass and saw his own face, and the coat, etcetera, which clothed his person, and said to himself,—it is out of the question for any lady not to think me extremely handsome, —and then I am certainly an elegant man, and, I am sure, that on particular days, when I take pains, I look as much the gentleman as any one that I know.

Love might draw his bow-string and take aim at an armadillo, and, for what I know, his aim might be successful. But let him try to make a woman fall in love with a man (no matter whether really vulgar or not), but whom that woman thinks vulgar, and Cupid's arrow would fall blunted to the ground. There is something repugnant to feminine nature in the detection of vulgarity. A woman may be devotedly in love with every description of villain you may please to name, but, if she has any delicacy of mind whatsoever, she cannot even put up with one whom she esteems vulgar.

No wonder, then, that Violet Woodville, with her head and her heart full of D'Arcy, could not endure the attentions of Mr. Brown.

"What do you think of her, D'Arcy?" cried Mr. Goring, who was one of a party of young men occupying the front seats of a public box at the Haymarket.

"Why, I don't fancy her,—nevertheless, she is a spirited little devil."

"Take my glass," said Mr. Harcourt to D'Arcy, "yours is not a good one—mine is excellent."

D'Arcy accepted the *lorgnette*, better to contemplate the lovely Mrs. Skiffney, for she was the lady he and his friends were dis-

cussing. At this moment his eyes fell upon some persons in a box opposite, and D'Arcy lowered his glass suddenly as he distinguished Violet Woodville; returning it into the hands of Harcourt, he abruptly excused himself on the plea of suddenly remembering an engagement, and left the theatre.

"What was that for?" inquired Goring.

"Heaven knows,—D'Arcy is insufferable with his caprices. Goring, sit closer, or some cheesemonger will take his place,—and pray desire that old woman on your side not to stifle us with her confounded musk, and to stop that young rascal her son from spitting his orange peel into my hat."

When had violet Woodville's heart beat so keenly as it did this night when she distinguished D'Arcy! and how great was the pleasure it gave her? how great! She never remembered then all the anxious hours she had passed, or that he had caused them. She saw him once more,—was not that a foundation for a few moments, nay, for hours of real delight?

Violet was all alive to the fact that she did behold D'Arcy, for love is so dreamy a state of existence, that it happens when, by untoward circumstances, we are parted from the loved object, that we actually grow to doubt even the reality of their existence, and fancy that the words and the scenes which are indelibly impressed on our own bosoms are either forgotten by them, or are as if they had never been.

There is a great deal of nervousness in combination with all very highly-wrought feelings; and there is no limit to the imaginativeness of a mind of great tenderness, alarmed and grieving. I never thought there was any exaggeration of sentiment in Werter's sending the little boy to Charlotte, that he might have something to behold, on which her eyes had rested. Our reason laughs to scorn this species of hypochondria of a love-despairing mind; but what, except some latent feeling of this nature, stirs up those inexplicable sensations in a lover's bosom, when only the name of his mistress is casually pronounced? or, if he sees, at a distance, her equipage, her servant, or anything belonging to her; what is it but the means thus afforded him, of confirming his conviction of her existence, and that he may behold her again and again, hear her speak, and to him? But, like the brilliant metal which

must be wrought upon ere we can have an idea of its ductile power, Love must undergo a similar process before we can learn all the variety of feelings which are attendant upon it.

D'Arcy was no sooner beheld than he was gone: in vain Violet Woodville hoped to see him return to his place in the box, and then, when she despaired of that, she yet felt pleasure in the presence of his late companions, for to them she had seen him speak; they were his friends—they had something to do with him; so she watched them, one by one, as they left the theatre; and, when all were gone, a sense of desolation crept over her that was hard to bear.





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## CHAPTER IX.

“How cruel seems this long estrangement!”

“Indifference from those we love  
Is the worst pang the heart can prove.”

THE day passed, and nothing more was heard of D'Arcy: but Violet continued to retain an expectation of meeting him once again. The party to Richmond, which our reader may remember some time before, he himself had proposed to her family that they should join. The arrangements were all made for it; and Violet, in the company of her parents and the Norrises, met the gay set of ladies, and the gallant gentlemen, who were the originators of the scheme. It was a beautiful day, and nature was dressed in its fairest splendour.

The company went upon the water, and the sound of mirth and music was ringing its melody up the banks of the Thames, as the boat glided on: there were jokes and laughter, and much civility and much good humour—everything, in short, to gladden the heart for one half hour, if external things could ever do that; but they cannot, alas! always do so; and Violet Woodville was now one of the victims who are forced to wear a gay face, to conceal a most wretched heart. D'Arcy was not there. To Violet, every-

things about him now was so enveloped in mystery, that she became a prey to secret worry as well as sorrow.

But she was looking beautiful, and she was not left to herself. She was urged to talk, and at last, with that recklessness that sometimes seizes an impetuous mind, her spirit caught the tone from others, and gave way

“ To all that frantic mirth—that rush  
Of desperate gaiety, which they,  
Who never felt how pain’s excess  
Can break out thus, think happiness.”

Many of her admirers were charmed at this transition : her parents were delighted and astonished to hear her laugh out so roundly; and one or two of her former pretenders approached her, with hope revived of finding some signal of encouragement.

Mr. Goring especially remarked the change, but he was sharp in his observation, and malicious, when it so suited him.

“ Pray, what excuse did D’Arcy make for not coming?” he called out to the gentleman whom Violet was talking to, while he mercilessly fixed his eyes upon her face.

“ I don’t know; I thought he was to be one of us originally.”

“ Why is D’Arcy not here?”

“ As if I knew!—he is in town; I saw him this morning.”

“ Have *you* any idea why Mr. d’Arcy is not here?” cried Goring to the victim of his inquiries.

“ No,” replied Miss Woodville, as steadily as she could.

“ I only asked *you*,” pursued Mr. Goring, “ because he is so devoted an admirer of yours, that I thought *you* must know something of him. Really, as you are of this party, his absence is unaccountable.” And Mr. Goring burst into a loud laugh, as if he had said something witty.

But it was not echoed by one other person; most of the ladies hated him, and with reason, and the men knew his brutality whenever he was inclined to be spiteful,—though, in this instance, they guessed his intention without comprehending its nature.

The day of pleasure was over at last, and at one in the morning the unhappy Violet was allowed the repose of solitude,—that great blessing to the very unhappy. “ Ah! la pitié n’est pas

due à celui qui pleure dans la solitude!" may well be said, in the words of a French writer.

Violet's feelings were not of that acute kind which denies us the power of sleep,—hers were more the jaded feelings of continual anxiety; and, worn out, with a harassed mind, doubly fatigued with the exertion of false spirits, she slept, to wake almost unrefreshed, perhaps, and to endure more keenly than ever the grief of the time before. “La mente appena risentita ricorre alle idee abituali della vita tranquilla antecedente; ma il pensiero del nuovo stato di cose le si affaccia *tosto sgarbaramente* e il *dispiacere* ne è più vivo in quel paragone istante\*.” But the observation has been so often made, it is a hackneyed one now, only that its being so hackneyed proves how similarly we all pay alike the tribute of earthly anguish; and it is always a consolatory assurance that *our* amount of unhappiness is not greater than that of most other people, and that that which we feel, others have felt, and others are to feel.

“Write to D’Arcy,” cried Emily Norris one day to her friend: the advice, if injudicious, was not ill-meant. Emily was really sorry to see the impression D’Arcy’s strange absence had made upon Violet Woodville, but she was not astonished at it.

“Impossible, Emily.”

“I don’t see that. His not coming near you for so long is very extraordinary, and you have a right to inquire the reason of it.”

“How can you argue thus? I have no right of the sort. I feel deeply the singularity of his conduct, and D’Arcy must know that,—but that gives me no authority to write to him, and there would be something in the act that I could not bear.”

“That ought to depend upon what you wrote; I am not counselling you to send a love-letter; but, if you did, I am quite sure D’Arcy would be at your feet in the next hour.”

“Oh! Emily.”

“But just write him,” continued Emily, “two lines that might be published at Charing Cross,—merely, that you are hurt at never seeing him, and that you wish to explain why you behaved so ill to him that night at the Opera.”

\* “I Promessi Sposi.”

"Never!—I never could. What would D'Arcy think of me?"

"No harm, I tell you again,—I will answer for it. It is not so much the things we do that signify, but the manner in which we do them. If you wrote in the sort of way I advise you, D'Arcy may think the better, but he cannot think the worse of you for it."

"It never can be my place to write to him, and the idea is shocking."

"Nonsense; you see things in a light of false refinement. I am quite persuaded there's a great deal of good about D'Arcy. I declare I like him now, though I never used to do it. Do you know there is something very piquant about D'Arcy?" pursued Emily Norris, in a half reverie. "He is very handsome; his eyes are quite peculiar. I am not surprised you are in love with him, but I believe I have told you that before,—I dare say I should, if he had made love to me, but he never did.—I don't think he was ever inclined to admire me, was he, Violet, eh?"

"No," replied Violet, with naïveté and absence, "no, he never told me that he admired you."

"Ah! I am not his style. Harcourt and D'Arcy are so different; the same sort of person never could please both those men. Oh, but about your writing,—now do it pray, Violet, I am sure you will not repent it; well, you will think of it, will you?" Emily went on for some time, endeavouring to persuade Violet Woodville to take the step she recommended, but unsuccessfully; however, in a day or two she returned to the charge, and by doing so very often she succeeded in making Violet less imperiously bent against it.

She was becoming quite miserable, and her father and mother were sadly distressed, by witnessing the change that took place in her spirits. Mrs. Woodville grew cross under it. She could not bear the want of her daughter's lovers, and she seemed to think she had a right to grumble, as if the misfortune was more hers than her daughter's. Poor Mr. Woodville felt far differently, but he was more truly unhappy than his wife.

The one who looked on with cooler judgment, but with equal feeling, was the old dancing-master. Each year, as he had grown older, so had he become more attached to the Woodvilles; and he would have rejoiced in seeing Violet splendidly married,—or ho-

nestly so, in her own class, and pursuing her profession with an acknowledged character. But now nothing of the sort seemed likely to come to pass, and at the present moment there was a mystery about her that he could not fathom. One day when he was calling at the Woodville's he found that they were out, but that Violet was not. He entered the sitting-room, and drew out of his pocket a Morning Post, which he began to read.

Violet soon made her appearance. "My father," she said, "is engaged at the Hanover Rooms, and mamma is gone to Madame Centi's."

"Well but, Violet, it is always enough if I find I can see you; only I wish you looked as happy as you used to do once. Stay, what is this?" and M. Dupas was silent for a few minutes, while he read something that had caught his eye in the paper.

"What is it?" Violet inquired.

"I am not sure," said M. Dupas, hesitatingly; "do you know what has become of Mr. d'Arcy, lately, *mon enfant*?"

"No, I don't; but do you know? What is it you are reading?" asked Violet, with intuitive quickness, and her eye glanced at the Morning Post.

The newspapers she sometimes obtained at her father's house had of late become of importance to her, not for the political intelligence they contained,—no, but in the account of dinners (valuable and rare occurrences in the month of September); in the list of names, she had now and then espied D'Arcy's, and was not that quite enough to invest every newspaper with a solid interest in her eyes?

The eagerness of her countenance at once induced her old friend to adopt the wise plan of showing to what he was alluding, by simply pointing to a paragraph, which ran as follows:—

"The Corsair sails on Tuesday, with Lord Rockemore and suite on board. Lady Rockemore and her eldest daughter, we understand, do not accompany his lordship. We have reason to believe George D'Arcy, Esq. intends forming part of his lordship's suite for the present; Mr. d'Arcy leaves town to-morrow."

At this moment Miss Norris, on a visit to Violet, bounded into the room, and this saved the necessity of commenting upon the intelligence of the Morning Post, both to M. Dupas and herself.

The instant she was alone with her friend, Violet showed the paragraph, and burst into tears.

"Write now, at once," exclaimed Emily, "there is no time to be lost: his going may not be true; but for heaven's sake endeavour to learn what it is that is at the bottom of all this. It will lead to nothing, only you will see him once again, which you say is all you want."

"It is very true, I must see him again; but what must I say? Emily, do not counsel me to do what is very foolish,—I would rather break my heart than that he should think ill of me!"

"Nonsense: it all depends on what you write." Emily snatched a pen: Violet felt so unhappy that she hardly knew how to reason with herself. The thought of having parted on such terms with D'Arcy, and that she should perhaps never see him more, was an irresistible idea which overpowered every other. Of late, too, she had been accustoming herself to think that she had behaved ill to him, and that Lord Stanmore was somehow mistaken in what he had said of him. Be it as it might, D'Arcy's influence, as the D'Arcys she had found him, had been gradually resuming its power.

It was so natural that a mind like hers should return speedily to a state of love and confidence; opposite sentiments were so uncongenial to a nature such as Violet's! She wrote then to D'Arcy.

There is no doubt that, under the same circumstances; another person, as sincerely upright, but with education, even merely a worldly one, would not have done as Violet Woodville now did. She would have argued, that however great D'Arcy's affection, still, as it was not an honourable one, it must be left to the unpleasant alternative he had appeared to adopt: (I am not sure, though, that this reasoning would have come from the very warmest heart in the world.)

"May I see you once again? I am conscious of being wrong in making the request, but I own I am very unhappy at thinking when we last met we were not friends. Believe only this, and then you will excuse my addressing you." Such was the letter Violet consented to write to D'Arcy. It was sealed, directed, and, under Emily's auspices, sent to its destination by means of that most convenient of all Mercuries, the Twopenny-post.

That Violet instantly regretted what she had done, when it was too late to be undone, is so exactly what everybody else feels when they think they have themselves been venturing to interfere with the course of their own destiny, that there is no use in enlarging upon the fact.

How poor Violet's heart beat the whole of that day and the next morning! She did not know whether D'Arcy would reply to her by coming or by writing. She did not know whether he would do either; she could not be certain he was yet in town, so as to get her letter. No wonder, then, that during twenty-four hours she nearly died under a palpitation of the heart, such as most of us have suffered from during hours of anxious expectation.

About three o'clock in the afternoon Mrs. Hummings entered the usual sitting-room, but it was not clear why she showed herself. Mrs. Woodville was writing, and Violet was picking the gold off the skirt of a sultana's robe, her mamma having the intention of turning it into a lining for some other garment she was in imagination contemplating.

"Only come to see about the fire, mam. You have not told me which gown I am to prepare," said Hummings, then addressing Violet.

"Oh, directly I will show you, Hummings."

"No, no; pray go on with that now," cried Mrs. Woodville; "that will do about your gown another time. Brush up the hearth, Hummings, and then go, and don't interrupt me again." Hummings was obliged to obey, and Violet was obliged to sit still.

"Bless me, what do I see!" cried Mrs. Woodville, suddenly taking the work out of her daughter's hands; "you have sewn the skirt up a second time, after undoing it once!"

"Heavens!" responded Violet, astounded at her own performance.

"And that wrong-side out, too!! What are you thinking of?" Mrs. Woodville said nothing more than this home question; she did not like to be very angry, and Violet presently found means to escape from the room.

"Hummings!" Hummings heard. "My gown," Violet began, by way of excuse, but she could not finish her sentence; she could only grasp an enclosed note, in a hand-writing which as yet



remained unknown to her, and which Mrs. Hummings held out. She read.

“Will you meet me to-morrow, at the usual hour, in the Gardens? Have no fear, I never can think ill of you.—Yours, G. D.”

What happiness! Poor Violet was so intensely happy on receiving this note, that in her joy she threw herself on her knees and thanked heaven. Then she read it over and over again, and gazed at the hand-writing, and kissed it. But it is true, in many cases besides this, that not all the manuscripts in the British Museum can ever have been half so prized as only one little line, written by a being that we love. The paper and the writing are almost sacred, and they bear with them a prestige, which time may add to, but which it cannot destroy,—and few, indeed, are the objects, even material or substantial, over which time has no power. For what feelings does it not annihilate, and what affections does it not impair? What events can it not obliterate, or at least deaden the remembrance of? But the handwriting of one we have sincerely loved acts as a talisman while we live, conjuring up so many feelings that it bewilders us; and with the conviction that the indulgence of such reminiscences too strongly disturb the even current of every-day life, we re-deposit the writing whose spell is so potent, and dread alike the pleasure and the pain of falling again under its influence.

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## CHAPTER X.

Dim not the starry diamond's lustrous blaze;  
Rob not the floweret of its balmy odour,  
Nor clip the wing that would have soared to heaven.  
Oh, let my heart's deep anguish plead to thee,  
With more than mortal eloquence, appealing  
To all the better feelings of the soul,  
The nobler attributes which God has given,  
To raise us from the devils we resemble.

OLD PLAY.

It is necessary, for the reader's comprehension of our story in its present stage, to return to that night at the Opera when Lord Stanmore joined the Woodvilles there, and, on that occasion, allowed his violence to get the better of his judgment.

Lord Stanmore was one of those characters whose goodness is developed by prosperity, and on which the frowns of fortune have a contrary effect. There can be no doubt of his extreme love for Violet Woodville; and when he talked of having thought of her as his wife, he did not exaggerate. It is fair to him to say, that perhaps no other person in her situation would have inspired him with the same feelings. He had a high sense of worldly morality, and a keen one of the nicest honour. He had been spoiled hitherto,

and he might have said, with Madame Montpensier, that his good qualities were all his own. He had not been less dissipated than most of his class are in this country, but his heart remained uncorrupted. There was a certain melancholy interwoven with his disposition, which had softened his mind without making it more impressionable; it only tended to give to his affections a greater degree of refinement, and to render him more alive to the wounds to which our feelings are ever subject.

I am always inclined to think, that the sentiments of men may be deeper than those of women. I know the ladies dispute this, and claim all the griefs of the heart as exclusively their own. I do not know why they are so eager for this monopoly; but any reasoning with them upon the point is, I have remarked, generally treated with contempt; and, almost invariably, they steadily adhere to the notion that the hearts of the male sex are more flinty than theirs, and that they do not suffer mentally as keenly as the fair Eves of the creation. But is it not reasonable to conceive, that as the strength of men is greater, and their power of action more enlarged, their feelings should be likewise in proportion? It should seem, that if this were not the case, the lever would be wanting to complete the nature of their being, and when a man has the power to face the danger that a woman turns from, the same force that supports him then, it is reasonable to suppose, will be applied to all the circumstances of his life. Be assured, my lady reader, the sentiments of men are, to the full, as deep as woman's, but then, as their moral energy is greater, their hearts will withstand that which would break a woman's.

A girl under the load of misery which oppressed Lord Stanmore, as he left the Opera on the night we have recurred to, would, in many cases, have committed suicide; the idea never occurred to the young peer,—but still he felt wretched. Undoubtedly it is a great agony to love entirely, and to find another possesses the heart you would have rendered up life to have been blessed with, even for a moment. For the time, a blighting anguish ruled the spirit of the unhappy lover.

He pursued his way along the streets alone, as we can be in the midst of people, and felt the dreary hopelessness of a heart bursting and irritated; and, as the vision of Violet Woodville rose

ever before him, he almost cursed the Providence which had given him all things except that which, to his passion, seemed the one thing needful. Originally, Lord Stanmore felt certain of having obtained Violet Woodville's preference, at least he was not prepared to find that this was to be the beginning and the end; neither, till now, did he know the force of his own love. It was only of late, when he looked round him, and compared this young girl with the rest of those who aimed at winning his fortune and his affection, that he felt aware that to him she was the phoenix;—all were so worldly, or so cold; so vain, or so uninteresting. There was not one of the Almack's beauties, married or single, that could rival Violet. He thought of every virtue she possessed, and of every charm that appeared to be one in his eyes, and, when he had done, his heart was breaking still,—for it loved; and reason, and the fullness of despair, were alike in vain against that earthly spell.

A hopeless passion, and the consciousness of a rival being preferred, are heavy to bear; and, in exulting youth, when prosperity is the glass behind and before us, then, indeed, it is a lesson learnt that lasts.

“ Aimer ! parole triste, insultante ironie,  
 Pour qui vit un matin,  
 Mot fatal, et qui n'a d'écho dans cette vie  
 D'amertume et dédain.

“ Ah ! choisir une femme, et créer autour d'elle  
 Tout un monde enchanté,  
 Et vouloir seulement, pour la faire immortelle,  
 Une immortalité.

“ A ses moindres discours suspendre tout son être,  
 Ému d'un doux espoir,  
 Et mourir tout le jour, hélas ! à se promettre  
 Un sourire le soir.

“ Et lorsque ce regard que le regard mendie  
 On n'a pu l'obtenir,  
 Sentir avec terreur à l'âme anéantie  
 Échapper l'avenir !

" A la vie, au bonheur, dans sa douleur farouche  
 Jeter un morne adieu,  
 Tomber à deux genoux, le front contre sa couche,  
 Et s'écrier ' Mon Dieu !

" Au lieu de les laisser l'un sur l'autre descendre  
 Si pesans à mon cœur,  
 Mon Dieu ! ne pouvez-vous ensemble les reprendre  
 Tous ces jours de malheur !

" Épuiser ces tourmens qu'en ce monde où nous sommes  
 On ne peut exprimer,  
 Lentement en mourir.... dans la langue des hommes  
 Cela s'appelle aimer."

*La Vie intime, Poésies de A. LAROUX.*

The French poet must have loved, or he could never have written these touching lines.

Other reflections started up to harass the mind of Lord Stanmore. How had he acted with respect to D'Arcy? Was it purely for Violet's sake that he had this night betrayed his friend, and had not jealousy urged him to treachery? But was it deserving such a name? Was it not fair that merely as *her* friend he should warn her against the love of one like D'Arcy! indifferent, as he considered him, alike to her ruin and his wretchedness. "It was most base of him, and I have done right," exclaimed Lord Stanmore; and as he spoke, his mind's truth denied the inference.

He had reached his own home, and the grey light of the morning was coming in at the window. Lord Stanmore had opened it, that he might breathe, for he felt almost as if he had not the power.

The clock struck four. The sound of the striking appeared to give him a resolution, which he hastened to execute. He left his house and went to D'Arcy's lodgings. He knocked two or three times without receiving admittance. At length the landlady's head, in a night-cap, and a bonnet, by way of shading the delicate nature of her *coiffure*, appeared through the half-opened door.

"Is Mr. D'Arcy at home?" inquired Lord Stanmore.

The landlady stated that she did not know, but she believed not; Mr. D'Arcy had a key to let himself in at whatever time he liked. Wild, for he was almost so, Lord Stanmore flew past the mistress of the house, and threw open the door of D'Arcy's apartments. He passed the first room into that in which he slept, and convinced himself that D'Arcy was indeed not at home.

The landlady followed him, and looked very cross: however, she knew Lord Stanmore by sight, and she condescended to hand him a lamp which stood in the passage, and pointed to the candles, which were on a buhl table; and told Lord Stanmore to replace the lamp when he had lighted the candles, that Mr. D'Arcy might not break his neck when he did come in. She then retired.

Lord Stanmore threw himself upon a couch. With one foot he kicked on the floor a knifecutter, and a volume of "Paul de Kock," and with the other, one of "Sand;" the reader's place being retained by the insertion of some small and tumbled notes, written on coloured paper. Alike lost in his reflections, and agitated by them, Lord Stanmore was only disturbed, at last, by a tired cabriolet driving up to the house door, which was presently unlocked; and D'Arcy's voice was heard giving directions to his servant for the following afternoon. D'Arcy mounted the stairs with a fatigued step, and threw open the door of his sitting room. He looked pale and out of temper, as he cast his cloak, his hat, and his gloves on the floor, and he started with evident annoyance at the sight of Lord Stanmore.

"Stanmore!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said the other, making an effort with himself; "doubtless you are surprised to see me here. I suppose, I ought to apologise, but I must speak to you,—till I have done so, I cannot rest."

D'Arcy bowed in acquiescence, but his countenance expressed any thing but pleasure. He looked ill, besides, and worn out. However he pushed a chair into its place, and seated himself; then leaning his head, with his arms upon the table, he placed himself in a listening attitude for Lord Stanmore's communication.

An observer of human nature, a minute observer, would have made a study of the character of these two young men from their countenances and demeanour at this moment. The light was

so placed as to fall exactly upon the faces of both, while the greater part of the room itself was almost obscured.

Lord Stanmore was at all times handsome, but for a man who until now had known no care, he had an habitually melancholy expression. We have said before that his character was tinged with it; now, however, it clouded his face, while the swollen lip and gloomy eye gave a sure index of strong mental irritation, and in his manner of speaking there was something indicative of the nervousness of a delicate mind, wrought upon by the violence of passion. He flushed as he spoke, and the gloom at intervals gave way to flashes of fever lighting up his eye. He leaned against the back of the sofa, as if he tried to obtain self-possession by his bodily repose.

D'Arcy exhibited a different character : his countenance scarcely betrayed his mind ; his features had much play, but they were strictly under command. There was not the same candour evinced by them, or, perhaps, D'Arcy's was a more worn countenance,—one as if it had lived to be the index of so many feelings, that it disdained to disclose them now. There was something very fine nevertheless in his brow, and altogether if you were inclined to distrust the man, it would not be for a small stake ; and if there was any thing villanous about him, Schiller's description might be given of it : “Die Schande nimmt ab mit dem wachsenden Sünde.” But D'Arcy was harassed and out of humour ; we have no right to quote Schiller because a man looks ill, and finds his house disagreeably invaded at five in the morning. D'Arcy was always handsome, but yet he did not always look so. The more he was known, the handsomer he was considered ; but he did not universally please, nevertheless, because his cold and somewhat sardonic expression was apt to offend, before he felt a wish to please. When he aimed at doing so, he never failed.

“I have seen the Woodvilles to-night,” said Lord Stanmore, abruptly.

“So have I,” replied D'Arcy.

Lord Stanmore continued, without heeding the interruption, “and I have done all I can to prevent that young girl falling a prey to you. I know you well, D'Arcy, and for once in my life I choose to tell you, that I consider that you are behaving ill, shamefully ill !”

"What do you mean?" cried D'Arcy, looking up in displeased astonishment.

"What I say!—that I have warned Violet Woodville against you; that I have told her your heart is professedly another woman's, and I have supplicated her not to become the mistress of George D'Arcy!"

D'Arcy coloured, and started from his chair; while he exclaimed in a tone of passion: "I should like to know what has given you the right to interfere thus in my concerns! Not our friendship, certainly."

"I will tell you why; because I loved her,—because I loved Violet Woodville, and, therefore, I did not choose to see her crushed by you; and, let me tell you, if you had had the smallest portion of generosity in your soul,—you would have hesitated in your determination to seduce so sweet a creature. You know her, and, therefore, you have not to learn that she is one so faultless that no one but a villain could successfully act the part you seek to play!"

"And yourself?" cried D'Arcy, sternly and interrogatively.

"No," answered Lord Stanmore with firmness; "no, I have tried—I may have wished it once; but as I have learnt to know her infinite purity, I have shrunk from a pursuit become, I think, dishonourable, when the object is one so much too worthy. However, I am convinced I had no chance of succeeding. She does not love me, but you have power over her, for you she does love. Use this power as you may, D'Arcy, and I say you are a villain!"

"Are you come here, at five in the morning, to pick a quarrel with me, Lord Stanmore?"

"I am not; but that is as you choose."

"You well know," said D'Arcy, "that one man has no pretext for addressing another as you have addressed me. I was not aware," he continued, his countenance assuming the withering coldness which made it at times almost hateful, "I was not aware that you were so very warm an admirer of Miss Woodville. Am I to understand by this tirade that your views are simply Platonic, or that I have interfered most unfortunately with a matrimonial speculation of your lordship's?"



Lord Stanmore's colour rose as he replied, " I neither regard your rage nor your cold-blooded sneers. What I do consider is that poor girl who believes in your attachment, and who may be ruined by the excessive art of one who actually does not care for her ! "

" And you have cared, " said D'Arcy, tauntingly.

" I have — there you are right ; and I think it was not the office of a friend to supplant me where he knew I should most feel it. "

" Neither was it the office of a friend to go and basely betray my errors, out of jealousy, to one whom you yourself allow to have preferred me. "

" You are not my friend, " said Lord Stanmore, hastily ; " that is past. All I aim at now is, if possible, to preserve a being whom I have adored, and whose guileless character has made an impression on me which her beauty could not have done. Yes, D'Arcy, I love her ; and if you had not come like a devil between me and my happiness, she would have been happy too ; for if it had not been for you, Violet Woodville would have loved me ; — and proclaim it to the world if you choose. I would have made her my wife ; and do you think that now I will sit tamely by, and witness your false professions of affection, in return for which that innocent one will barter her whole existence ? and, instead of my wife, see her be, some day, your neglected mistress ? The blessed alternative you will have brought her to ! Do you think, I say, I would stand by and know all this, and not warn her of the fate that hangs over her ? "

While Lord Stanmore spoke, D'Arcy's countenance changed ; he appeared to reflect, and at length he slowly exclaimed in a softened tone, " And you have loved her even unto this ! "

" And you have brought me even unto this ! " rejoined Lord Stanmore.

" Allow me to observe one thing, " said D'Arcy quickly. " Admitting your right to interfere to save " — and D'Arcy resumed the tone of irony — " admitting your right to do that if you could, most decidedly you had none to inform her of what you could not know to be true. Why did you tell her that I made false love to her ? "

"Your attachment to another woman is a fact so glaringly known to all London, that I am only glad to be the first, and not the second, or third, or twentieth person who will tell her as much, perhaps when it is too late. Be assured, D'Arcy, that had your infidelity taken any other direction, I am the last man to trouble myself with anything that so little concerned me."

"My private affairs seem better known to you than it can be said that I ever made them—I have permitted no confidant."

"There are some *liaisons* too glaring to be a secret to any one."

"At all events, you could not tell the measure of my affection for that person or any other; and could not, with justice, stigmatise my declarations as false, be they made to whom it so pleased me."

"The lady is too young and too handsome, otherwise the world might have surmised you were indifferent while she was devoted," answered Lord Stanmore coldly.

"This comes of her folly in letting it be seen," said D'Arcy, passionately, and as if thinking aloud.

"I am surprised, D'Arcy," observed Lord Stanmore, "that, lax as you are, and even with your principles, your heart does not fail at the thought of seducing that poor girl. Most men have some compunction when they fall in with so artless and so perfect a creature; for I conclude," continued Lord Stanmore, with a piercing look of inquiry, "that your opinion of her is as good as my own."

"On my word it is; and I am astonished that you think I should be able to seduce her."

"God forbid it!" said Lord Stanmore, burying his face in his hands, as if the reflection was too much to bear; and such, in fact, he felt it. It is probable that D'Arcy saw the emotion of Lord Stanmore, for his bearing ceased to be harsh, and when he spoke again it was deliberately.

"I wished," said Lord Stanmore, "to tell you that, in future, I shall do all I can to save her from you, as I would from any other man whom I thought she was in danger from. I would not now, as I before said, seduce Violet Woodville, if I could, and I would have married her, I repeat."

“ And why not still ? ”

“ Still ! No, she loves another ; and half her charm is gone, in my eyes, as a wife.”

“ Your behaviour is highly chivalrous, Stanmore,” replied D’Arcy, indulging in a slight sneer ; “ doubtless it would have its due effect upon Violet ; but,” added he, more gravely, “ if all you say is true, I regret the past. I had no idea you thought of marrying, and, I must tell you, when I first fell in love I did not discover any reason for supposing I was supplanting you, in her affection, at least. I never thought she cared seriously for you ; and, if you remember, I told you, the first day we met after you had been to Brighton, that I had fallen in love with Violet Woodville. With regard to you, I positively feel that I have nothing to reproach myself with : I wish I could say as much with respect to her. But, if I have deprived Miss Woodville of an affection which was to prove of such advantage, I must endure regret all my life.”

D’Arcy paused, he looked paler, and when he resumed speaking, it was with rather a nervous voice.

“ I will retire,” he said, “ and I will leave you master of the field, to which I feel you have a better claim.”

“ If this conviction is your only motive for so doing, spare yourself the trouble of naming it,” said Lord Stanmore, “ for I am no longer thinking of proposing to Miss Woodville, if you allude to that ; I merely wish by common means to prevent her future disgrace.”

“ Your words are wonderfully contradictory,” replied D’Arcy, with asperity ; “ in one breath you talk of Violet Woodville’s high-flown character, and in the next as if her salvation only depended on your most arduous efforts. However, my resolution is equally taken. On the whole, all that has passed is, perhaps, for the best. She is, indeed, too good to become the mistress of any man, and, what is more, I do not think I could ever have made her mine, even if she liked me as much as you say she does, but which I doubt. Now, listen :—I am going to leave town, and shortly England, and I will have nothing further to say to the Woodvilles, unless, indeed, Violet herself should be the person to recall me : that is a temptation I could not stand. We both know enough of her to be certain it is a most improbable one. You are now satis-

fied, I presume,—and I am tired," said D'Arcy, putting his hand to his forehead.

Lord Stanmore rose, and muttered something, which was not distinct, as he took his hat and quitted the apartment.

When he was gone, D'Arcy sat with his folded arms upon the table. He seemed lost in his own thoughts, and it was a deep sense of bodily fatigue that roused him at last, and then the single lamp was going out. He threw himself on his bed, but it was long before he slept, and, in the mean time, the morning was growing old.

It does not always answer to analyse the motives of action,—they are among the mysteries of our being, and are not seldom incomprehensible. Certain it is that there are times, when a noble mind has the lowest level, and a hardened heart its moments of glorious aspirations. Is it for us to say that heart is irreclaimable? The inconsistencies which dignify or debase our nature have become a barrier into which the searchings of reasoning cannot penetrate. The bad and the good get so commingled, that we lose the one when we would separate it from the other. In some one individual act, perhaps, the good predominates unalloyed, but, even then, it may have been the impulse of a moment, and the solely estimable point in an ill-regulated and unprincipled disposition; whereas a well-ordered character is never carried out of its equipoise. Such a one has not the struggles of being extremely virtuous. These fall to the lot of the feeble or the vicious, when the better principle conquers; we should, therefore, admire, without striving to penetrate all the unknown springs which have influenced the action. We will only remember that, while the good may play the hypocrite unto themselves when they are greatly righteous, he who greatly sins will yet despise self-deceit when he aims at duty. The good actions of a bad man are sometimes performed with more humility than those of the saints of this earth: there is often a simplicity in the virtuous deeds of a sinner, and, strange to say, as if their worth was only unappreciated by themselves. I am not talking of the Publicans and the Pharisees of the world. I mean to refer only to the upright amongst us, and the purer in deeds, and to those whose vice is the deeper because they have not cared to find it vice, and and who sin and like it,

and see not why they should not. I mean no sneer at goodness, —I mean no base allusion to the possible hypocrisy of virtue. The heart must be bad that would love to detract from goodness ; but a lesson may be learnt, if it is true that the pride of the good is developed when the humility of the wicked is so likewise.

I do not know what has suggested these reflections : if the reader thinks D'Arcy has given rise to them, he is at liberty to think so ; but I do not say so.

D'Arcy kept his promise, such as he gave it, to Lord Stanmore, and, whatever feelings or motives induced him to give it,—if they were good, or if the effort cost him dearly,—he told no one, for that was not his way ; and, besides, D'Arcy knew better than most men the infinite compassion we have for our own bosom's woes, and the infinite contempt and the slender pity we feel for those of all other people.

## CHAPTER XI.

"A something all-sufficient for the *heart*  
Is that for which the sex are always seeking ;  
But how to fill up that same vacant part ?  
There lies the rub—and this they are but weak in.  
Frail mariners afloat, without a chart,  
They run before the wind, through high seas breaking ;  
And when they have made the shore through every shock ,  
'Tis odd, or odds, it may turn out a rock."

BYRON.

D'ARCY could not go out of town, as he told Lord Stanmore he should, and as he had intended : business obliged him to remain.

Lord Stanmore meanwhile returned to his mother, and D'Arcy, as he himself thought, was within a fortnight of going abroad, at the very time when Violet Woodville wrote to him, and that the "Morning Post," with the usual accuracy of a newspaper, announced his departure for the next day.

D'Arcy was too acute a judge of human nature to be misled by Violet's letter. He only saw in it a proof of her soft and sweet character. But she did not know this, and when she wrote to D'Arcy she was oppressed with shame. He reassured her when they met, and then it was she wept with joy.

D'Arcy was touched. "You love me, then?" said he.

"Yes," answered a low voice that tears were stifling.

D'Arcy sighed. Strange, perhaps, to say, but not to feel, Violet had not asked as yet for any explanation: neither had D'Arcy volunteered it: she seemed too happy; for hers was love indeed—the love that cannot remember a fault, when the object is in its presence.

"Love is not Love,  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove:  
Oh, no! it is an ever fixed mark,  
That looks on tempests, and yet is not shaken;  
It is the star of every wandering bark,  
Whose worth's unknown altho' his height be taken."

SHAKESPEARE.

At length, however, D'Arcy told Violet of the promise of not seeing her again, which Lord Stanmore had obtained from him.

"He also told me of the information he had given against me. I kept my word with Stanmore; and, after all he had been so good as to say, I concluded you would soon forget, and, probably, despise me. If I ever was generous, or better than I knew myself to be, it has been lately, while I have undergone this ordeal, and attempted nothing in my own favour."

"But was it not true?—Is it false?"

"What, Violet?"

"That you love some one I do not know?"

"False! Oh, yes, but not that the world believes I do."

"Oh, Heavens!" exclaimed Violet, turning very pale; "I understand your evasion, Mr. d'Arcy—leave me!" and she resolutely stood still.

"My sincerity has then lost me your esteem?"

"Esteem! I did not think you could have deceived me thus."

"Listen to me—nay, do—you must! You have not heard me; in fairness you must listen to me. What, then, have I done? I have declared I loved you as I loved no other; and I declare it still."

"Then you are highly treacherous to another person."

"No, I am not; nothing should induce me to take so much

pains to deceive any one : had I the inclination, believe me, I have not the time," said D'Arcy, half sneeringly, half earnestly.

"The time!—are you now laughing at me, Mr. d'Arcy?" exclaimed his companion, while the tears rose to her eyes.

"At you? Oh, never!—but what I say is the fact."

"Then some one must have been as much misled as to your affection for her as I have been. I concluded that it was an error of Lord Stanmore's—a mistake; I was foolish to think so. Lord Stanmore could not have been wrong."

"You can then so easily believe me to be all that is contemptible?" replied D'Arcy.

"I do," answered Miss Woodville, as she again signified her wish that D'Arcy should leave her. Her cheek was deeply coloured, and her lip trembled. D'Arcy looked anxiously to seek compassion in her eyes—

" Eyes so pure, that from their ray  
Dark vice would turn abashed away."

"Violet!" he exclaimed, with emotion, "what I have said is the truth; I have not deceived you or any one else : can you not conceive that it is impossible for me to compromise a lady whose name the busy tongue of scandal has already connected too much with mine? Even to you there are things I ought not to betray. But if you are willing to put faith in me, do it not by halves. I have declared I never will be insincere with you. I have been so with others—with many; but you are worthy of my better feelings; you have inspired them, I should rather say : I pledge you my word—and that I have never broken (even to a woman)—that I have not deceived you or any one else; and that I loved and love you better than all I have met with in this created world. Ah, Violet! if you knew me, you would believe me. If you knew me as I know myself, you might esteem me less, but still you would believe me."

"But you give no explanation, and what am I to think? A lady would not place herself—her character, at the mercy of every one, if at least she was not led on by the strongest belief in your affection?"

"The ungoverned mind of an ill-educated woman, under no



personal control, may lead to anything. It is a character I have a horror of !—but not later than to-morrow I will put an end to a connexion which gives me no pleasure, and which may bring disgrace upon one unfortunate person, and misery upon another. Are you satisfied, Violet ?—Then look at this.” D’Arcy drew a letter from his waistcoat pocket. It was directed to him, and in a woman’s hand. “ There! read the first lines of this, and say if they do not confirm what I have told you.”

Violet read while D’Arcy held the letter.

“ I knew I never had your love—you never flattered me with pretending that I had; but your compassion and forbearance — ”

This was all that D’Arcy thought it necessary that Violet should read.

“ There exist strange people,” she exclaimed, while D’Arcy folded up the letter; “ but this lady must be lost to every thing. Oh, Mr. d’Arcy, she must be out of her senses; have pity upon her, whoever she is, and point out to her the sadness of her conduct. Is she a young lady or a widow? ”

“ Neither,” answered D’Arcy, laughing; “ she is married, and to the very best of stupid men, I believe.”

“ Her husband alive? ”

“ Dearest! I assure you, husbands don’t die so easily; ” and D’Arcy laughed on in spite of himself, even while he breathed the influence of Violet Woodville’s innocent character.

“ Oh, if you knew how I love you! ” said D’Arcy, fondly; “ there is such a charm in every word you utter. What I would give to be able to live my life over again, and in the early part of it to have met with you! I am sure I should have been better than I am now; I am convinced my destiny is linked with yours; I do not know how, but I have a strange presentiment of unhappiness comes over me; without you I cannot live, and united to you, misery would attend both of us. I am not good enough for the difficult position a marriage with you would place me in; I have no fortune, but while I exist my spirit will cling to yours: and the other day, as I sat alone and thought of you, I half dreamt—it must have been a dream—that my death and yours would be at the same time. I felt a strange pleasure in the idea. If I could

not live with you, it would be an exquisite thing to die with you. Violet, would you die with me?"

"Yes!"

"She turns and speaks; her voice is far,  
Far above singing!"

"Dearest!" said D'Arcy, softly, lost in the emotion of his own happiness at the conviction he felt of being so completely loved,—and they continued for some minutes in silence.

"Joy like his, like hers,  
Deals not in words."

For it was joy, the pure and rapturous joy, of affection in its best, its tenderest, and, above all, its purest moment. Everything is more ecstatic when it approaches Heaven, and love has its divinity, but it is only during one short moment, when itself can be forgotten,—

"And even the spirit of man is divine."

"And now I must again say this, Violet," resumed D'Arcy, "that when I promised Stanmore to give you up, it was the most virtuous act of my whole life. Had I loved you one atom less, or had you been less perfect in my eyes, I could have abjured the idea, and while I had the power I would have pursued you till I acted differently, far differently, from the way I have done," continued he, faintly smiling; "but I loved so much that for once I was not selfish; and yet now you shall not have to reproach me for everything. I fancy you could marry Stanmore, Violet; do so, and forget me!"

"Never, Mr. d'Arcy," replied Violet Woodville, eagerly.

"And why not? Attend to me while I have the courage to utter the words. You do wrong, my darling one: he is excellent, and you are worthy of sharing his destiny. You could not marry in the class you belong to; you were meant for something better, and Stanmore offers you the bright career that should be yours.

What would you have, Violet? He is not old, nor ugly, and is he not intellectual? I am not asking you to sacrifice yourself to rank and riches; but if you had been born to the fairest happiness, I know nothing that could insure it more than to marry such a man as Stanmore. Had he no other advantages, his very heart, with its generous feelings, is a treasure on which a woman might repose for ever in security."

"But I do not love Lord Stanmore."

"But you would, in time."

"No!"

"Yes, you would, Violet," said D'Arcy, mournfully; "trust to my experience."

"I shall not change; I know I never can be happy; besides, this is useless—Lord Stanmore would not now think of me."

"At this moment he would not; he is too proud, and he thinks you love me;—but I am—am going; and his affection will not be so easily overcome as he may now suppose. When once I am out of the way, he will be at your feet again; I am sure of it: so marry him, then, Violet. I will answer for your happiness, though you cannot!"

"Doubtless you are sure of your own, Mr. d'Arcy," answered Violet, with some pique.

Her lover looked reproachfully at her, and there was a sorrowful sadness in his expression.

"Oh, Violet," exclaimed D'Arcy, "if you can give me an unkind word now, my reward is indeed denied, and I am punished when I least deserved it!"

"Do not say so, Mr. d'Arcy."

"I must, for it is as I feel; it is hard to be reproached at this moment."

"Forgive me then!" cried Violet, hastily; "was I unjust? I care so much for your affection, and it is that I thought of."

"I never before proved it so thoroughly," continued D'Arcy; "I have spoken against myself, and it has cost me an effort that Heaven may remember!"

At this moment the lovers were interrupted by Mrs. Hummings. She had remained at her usual respectful distance while D'Arcy

and Violet walked on together. She now approached to remind them that they had turned up the walk a second time, and that her young lady would be expected at home.

D'Arcy and Violet parted without referring to when they should meet again; both had a motive for this forbearance, probably.

"So, Violet, what do you think is the news?" were Mrs. Woodville's first words on seeing Violet after her morning's walk. "Wonders never cease."

"Yes," said Mr. Woodville, "it has all gone right for them; but it might have all gone wrong. It is only some folks have luck, and some have not,—that's all; nothing else."

"And some young ladies play their cards better, and some will not condescend to play them at all."

"And I think none the worse of those that don't," said M. Dupas, emphatically.

"What's the news?" Violet demanded.

"Oh, only that your friend, Emily Norris, is to marry Mr. Harcourt, forsooth! Much good may it do him," said Mrs. Woodville, with the most evident maternal jealousy.

"I am delighted!" exclaimed Violet, with a countenance that corroborated her word. "Dear Mamma, she will be so happy! Father, do walk with me to the Norrises. It is just what Emily wishes; and she is quite fit for it," continued Violet, speaking her thoughts aloud; "she will make a very good wife; though she is not born a lady, she was intended for one."

"Is it joy at Emily's marriage makes you look so happy this morning, Violet?" asked M. Dupas, after he had watched her some minutes.

"Oh, yes, I am so glad of it," she answered, without meaning to tell an untruth. She did not know that seeing D'Arcy had made her look so radiant.

"I do feel much better this morning. Father, I will put on my bonnet, and you will walk with me to the Norrises."

"Very well, Violet, dear; but make haste."

Violet did not require the last injunction. The step of the happy is always quick—so Violet flew.

The Norrises were at this moment the most prosperous people

certainly, in the world ; that is to say, they thought themselves so, —and, of course, the true measure of any one's prosperity must be to judge of it according to one's own view. Mrs. Norris had achieved the object of her secret ambition ; and Miss Norris had so many reasons for being pleased, it would be impossible to enumerate them.

"Of course, Mr. Woodville," said Mrs. Norris, in answer to his congratulations, "of course I feel flattered that my Emily should make so good a connexion ; and I must say I think she deserves it. It has always been my aim to bring her up with the best principles, and an idea of conducting herself with propriety ; it is conduct, Mr. Woodville, which I have endeavoured to teach her ; I have a horror of anything that gives rise to talking, —there never was a word against Emily, thank heaven ! and Mr. Harcourt declares himself to be the happiest of men. His affectionate behaviour towards me is quite delightful ; it has touched me to the heart, I assure you."

"I am glad you like your son-in-law, Mrs. Norris," said Mr. Woodville, somewhat bluntly.

"He is a most gentlemanlike young man," continued Mrs. Norris. "It would all have been arranged much sooner, according to Mr. Harcourt's own wishes, but I, as Emily's mother, had feelings of delicacy ; Emily having no fortune, and having been on the stage, I knew were reasons that Harcourt's relations might allege against the marriage. It is always necessary to respect people's prejudices, and I am the last person to wish to force my daughter upon any one ; and Emily herself would have died at the thoughts of such a thing."

"And so, now Mr. Harcourt's friends wish him to marry Miss Norris?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Norris, boldly, but colouring a little ; "yes, indeed, —yes, I may say they approve. He has no near relations, which is a good thing ; —no father, you know, or anything of that sort. Well, Mr. Woodville, and how soon are we to hear of Miss Violet making a great marriage ? She is so admired, I am sure, by the gentlemen."

"Why, yes, any one that looks at her must admire her," said Woodville, recovering his good humour, which, without his

knowing it, had been a little ruffled by the exceedingly full-blown satisfaction of Mrs. Norris.

"There's a knock at the door," exclaimed that lady, who was not keeping her dignity in its usual quiescence.

"It is Mr. Harcourt,—yes, it is;" and Mrs. Norris, with a rush of ready-made maternal tenderness, flew from the chair to meet her future son-in-law at the door.

Harcourt looked gay and happy enough, but when he advanced without seeing Emily, his face betrayed his innate spoiledness, and he passed his hand through his hair, and indolently, if not coldly, allowed Mrs. Norris to take his other hand between both of hers.

"Dear Mr. Harcourt, so good of you to come so early: Emily will be enchanted!"

"Why, of course, it's Emily I want to see, Mrs. Norris; and pray where is she?"

Mrs. Norris thought fit to look over Harcourt's implied rudeness, and told Emily's betrothed that she was in the little boudoir,—"My little boudoir; she has a friend with her."

"A friend! what friend,—what friend?" said the lover, sulkily. "Who ever heard of anybody having friends at this hour of the morning? Why it's not—oh, by my *Breguet*, I see it is a quarter to one."

Emily Norris herself, and Violet, now entered, and when Harcourt saw who her friend was, he was appeased; for he could not help thinking what a much worse one his Emily might have than chosen the sweet and beautiful Violet Woodville.

She and her father rose to take leave, after making the most proper apologies for Mrs. Woodville's not having come with them; the real fact having been, that she could not undergo the sight of Mrs. Norris's self gratulation.

"Well, Violet, what do you think of them all?" inquired Mr. Woodville, as he walked home with his daughter.

"I like Mr. Harcourt well enough, as far as I have seen him, and Emily, of course, likes him; and she is quite pleased,—and that is everything; and she is so kind to me, and almost wants me to come and live with her."

"Well, that shows a good heart, at any rate, for the present; but she will soon get her head filled with vanity, I dare say."

"Oh dear, no,—I do not think that. Emily is such a different character from Mrs. Norris. She told me it was, after all, a surprise, when Mr. Harcourt proposed; for that she did not know what he meant to do, or which way it would end; and that she had been so worried lately, she says she is so glad to feel certain about it at last."

"And now, Violet," asked Mr. Woodville, in surprise at his daughter's unusual gaiety, "I would fain know what it is makes you look so much better? and why you are not breaking your heart as much to-day as yesterday, and every day for the last month past?"

"I do not know,—it is such a fine day!"

Violet's father was not a suspicious man.

Violet met D'Arcy again next morning in the Gardens, and she went on doing so nearly every day.

Her happiness at having his society once more was quite enough to colour every hour of her present life; and, in the intoxication in which she lived, reason, without being less acute, had not the same power. So now she only knew she was wrong, without any longer staying to consider how wrong.

Love, with lovers, is such an inexhaustible theme,—and nothing by them is said so often but that it is not new when said again. There was not then any want of conversation between Violet and D'Arcy; we may remember, too, how very eloquent becomes even Cupid's silence.

D'Arcy was not always the same; sometimes he was restless and angry, without a defined cause, and would upbraid Violet, and not explain himself; and the very distress that this occasioned her, riveted her affections more firmly to him. So true it is, that even the faults of those we love, when not carried too far, do but add to the prestige of affection. Diderot has somewhere said, "*Celui qui ne connaît pas la peine n'est pas à compter parmi les enfants des hommes;*" and perhaps it is in some connexion with this principle, that we are fonder of a faulty being than of one of more perfection. With the former, is it that they are rendered dearer to us by their similitude to ourselves?—is it that, because of their faults, we feel more particularly that they are "*à compter parmi les enfants des hommes!*"

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CHAPTER XII.

"'Tis said that marriages are made in heaven,  
But I have known, at least, some six or seven,  
Of which the origin the wise could trace  
Most clearly to a very different place.  
Not that I mean a single word to state  
Against this peerless lady and her mate :  
If passion, fancy, bear a holier name,  
The effect in this one case has been the same ;  
The bridegroom dotes intensely, and the bride  
Can boast of wordly wisdom for her guide."

ANON.

"HARCOURT, I am told you are going to be married," said D'Arcy, accosting him in St. James's street.

"Who told you so?" said Harcourt; looking very much what I once heard said of a certain gentleman, that he had the air of a poacher, conscious that the tail of a pheasant, out of season, had escaped from his coat pocket behind.

"That I forget; but is it true? because I must congratulate — felicitate."

"For Heaven's sake, D'Arcy, say no more about it," said Harcourt, taking hold of D'Arcy's arm. "I don't want to have the whole cursed world buzzing in my ears with congratulations. I



mean to do it,—I have made up my mind. What's the use of being a man if one is not to have a mind of one's own? I know what suits me,—I am essentially a marrying man; and I hate all those London girls, they have no freshness about them, none of the innocence of—of—”

“ Of Miss Norris ? ”

“ I don't mean that, exactly; but, in short, I know what suits myself, and I don't care a d—n for her not having a sixpence.”

“ Oh! no,—half ‘ those London girls ’ have not a sixpence.”

“ Ah, but I mean, I don't care about her being,—having been, on the stage; what does it matter? A handsome girl, as she is! and so well brought up, too!—what does that signify?”

“ Oh, it is entirely a matter of opinion.”

“ Yes, it is,” rejoined Harcourt, as if he was comforted; “after all, the thing is to be happy, and I rather applaud myself for not being talked out of my intentions by my friends. I have no idea of a man who has not the spirit to go out of the beaten track when it suits him; as if, when she is my wife, she was not my wife!”

“ What, do they say she will not be ? ” asked D'Arcy, with *naïveté*.

“ No, no; but what I mean is, what does it matter about who she was, when she is my wife ? ”

“ It is entirely a matter of opinion, as I said before; at all events, you are satisfied, and that is to you,—must be to you, a point gained.”

And D'Arcy tried to leave his friend, but Harcourt took his arm, and hesitatingly inquired,—“ So I have not your approval, D'Arcy,—eh? I see that.”

“ My dear Harcourt, I shall be too charmed to become better acquainted with the future Mrs. Harcourt; and I am the last man in the world to foresee the possibility of disapproving of the wife of my friend.”

D'Arcy escaped, and Harcourt endeavoured to force away the unpleasant reflections, which his foolish arguments showed plainly he had to contend with in his own mind. He soon succeeded, for he went directly to see Emily.

The preparations for the marriage were not long in making: a special license was procured, and in the presence of Mrs. Norris,

the Woodvilles, and D'Arcy, Emily Norris was united to Mr. Harcourt. D'Arcy was the only friend that Harcourt asked to be present, and he was too happy to profit by the opportunity of meeting Violet.

D'Arcy made some excuses to the Woodvilles for not having been to them for so long a time; and they in their turn expressed their surprise that he had not. Mrs. Woodville could not conceal her satisfaction at seeing him again; but her invitations to D'Arcy to come and visit them as before, were not echoed by her husband. However, there was not much time for conversation before the bride was led in by her mother, and Harcourt entered the room at the same moment. He looked ill, and as if his mind was not at ease; he gazed at Emily when she appeared, and then, before he went towards her, approached D'Arcy, and said in a low voice, "At least she is handsome, I have that excuse."

"Yes, indeed, if that be one."

"At all events, to the last moment you have dissuaded me. For God's sake, should this turn out ill, do not reproach me with your former advice."

"For worlds I would not," answered D'Arcy. "But, my dear fellow, how comes it that your courage fails you now?"

"It does not,—but it is for life, and I may have been mistaken."

"None of us are infallible."

"Thank you, D'Arcy. Chance what may," continued Harcourt, emphatically, "you and I are old friends," and he walked up to Emily.

The ceremony began. It was impossible not to allow that if beauty could make Harcourt's strange marriage an excusable one, it was not deficient. Emily Norris was very handsome,—it must be called a fine style of beauty, also. There was something very aristocratic in her finely-formed figure, and her well-bred manners did not contradict the impression made by her first appearance. Mrs. Norris had taken pains to furnish her daughter with every accomplishment, and she worked upon a profitable soil. So far there was nothing objectionable; and nothing more remained to be done for Emily than to leave her in her new station, to acquire, if she could, the ease of good society, of that society in which Harcourt lived, but of which Emily, as yet, knew nothing.

During the ceremony D'Arcy stood next Violet Woodville ; she thought much less of what was going on in her presence than she would have done if D'Arcy had not occupied her thoughts almost wholly.

He, on the contrary, was graver than usual, and, to judge by that, and his air of fixed attention, it appeared as if he was absorbed in the service. Once, when Violet casually looked at him, she was struck with his countenance : it was sorrowful, and when his eyes fell upon her, she could have thought she saw them full of tears. Could the marriage affect him so much as this ? Violet reproached herself for not attending to it more. Alas ! her thoughts recurred to him, and she forgot that " thou shalt not make to thyself idols, or worship them. "

D'Arcy walked home with the Woodvilles. It was a beautiful September day, and he listened attentively to their summer plans, for even the Woodvilles had their summer plans ; what English people have not ? and those who have not yet escaped from town never think the summer elapsed until they have.

Violet had some geraniums in her hand, but, by degrees, the air scattered their red leaves, and, seeing this, before she reached home she threw their remains away on the pavement. D'Arcy watched with his eye the useless discarded flowers.

" To-morrow you must let me come and see you ; I have not been in your house for such a long time,—may I come ? " said D'Arcy, winningly.

Mrs. Woodville replied by reminding him that she had already begged him to renew his visits.

" *Au revoir*, then," said D'Arcy ; but, as he approached and took Violet's hand, he looked dejected, and he said something briefly and sadly, but what, Violet could not hear.

Alone in the street, D'Arcy retraced his steps until he reached the spot where the geraniums had been cast away. There they lay still, on the sunny pavement,—one by one he picked them up. No eye was there to see him, and no one to repeat the tale, or make a merit of it in the eyes of his mistress,—yet his lips kissed the dying flowers, and carefully he took them home.

In a listless mood D'Arcy wandered to his own abode. The end of September in London is just the time, if ever, that nature

cries out for the country,—it is the interval between the end of all things and the recommencement of them,—which will give rise to a desire for fresh air even in the breast of the most thorough-paced town-bred gentleman; and this was now the case with D'Arcy, or if it was not, his ill humour and the gloomy turn of his mind, as he walked along the streets, gave testimony to some source of discontent destructive of good humour.

He envied Harcourt,—how pleased Harcourt would have been if he could have guessed it,—yes, D'Arcy envied him; not his being the husband of Emily, but it was envy of another's momentary happiness, and a yearning after its possession. D'Arcy felt irritated against the whole world, and more so still with himself. He took a fit of hatred against mankind,—he saw everybody worse than they are,—he reflected upon the inequalities of fate,—he disliked his own existence, and contemned and sneered at every other person's.

He thought he was wisely moralising. ? “Vu en passant, un homme blasé ainsi qu'un ambitieux déçu, ressemble à un sage\*.”

He felt weary of life, and a wish for something better, and when he tried to grasp the “lighter than air, hope's summer visions,” and saw, alas! how vainly,

“If but a beam of sober reason play,”

his mind returned to its bitterness; and he felt regret and sadness, and the *néant* of all things.

“En vain la passion entreprend quelquefois à nous persuader que nous sommes nés pour le plaisir.”

Ideas of a higher import will at times cross the mind of every man, and what does it signify how trivial the course that has given rise to them?”

The reflection will come home as freely to the bosom of a George d'Arcy as it would to that of the sober-minded philosopher, who gazes on planets till almost forgetting that he lives in one.

\* Madame de Genlis.

† Massillon.

On reaching his house D'Arcy's servant gave him a note. He read it through attentively; he reflected for an instant, and then ordered his cabriolet to come to the door. Before he stepped into it, D'Arcy had carefully deposited between the leaves of a book the almost flowerless geraniums he had so tenderly rescued. It is curious how ungenerous our conduct can be, and how tender, how divine almost, our sentiments!

The greater the pity that a bad education should make our feelings so often the only fruits of a disposition that has emanations from Heaven, and that the selfishness of a corrupt life should be the corroder of all

"That immortal fire,  
To human hearts in mercy given,  
To lift from earth our low desire."

BYRON.

D'Arcy drove to a house in one of the squares at the west end; he was admitted, and shown by the servant into the drawing-room.

A lady, and a very pretty one, was reclining upon the sofa; she was young, not above five or six and twenty, and curiously dressed—rather theatrically; a style of costume, by the bye, which would occasion me great uneasiness if any symptoms of it appeared in my domestic circle. She was very fair and pale, with languishing, overflowing blue eyes—very pretty eyes, but bearing no resemblance to my wife's, thank Heaven! or it would be impossible to have the satisfaction of saying, like one of Paul de Kock's heroes, "*mon ami, je ne le suis pas.*"

The lady, such as she has been slightly portrayed, started up on seeing Mr. d'Arcy, and flew towards him.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed.

"Surely you expected me," said D'Arcy, in answer to this exclamation.

"Yes, but my nerves are so shattered, my feelings have been so wrought upon; but, thank God! it is you."

"Why, certainly it is; did you want me particularly to-day?"

"Is that what you say to me?"

"I really only asked a very simple question."

"I am most miserable;" and the speaker, in testimony of her words, dived her head into a heap of sofa cushions.

"Do you want your salts?" asked D'Arcy, coldly.

"Monster!" murmured the lady.

"I had better leave you at present," and he rose.

In an instant a shriek was uttered, and his knees were clasped by the softest white hands.

"Don't scream so, I beg," cried D'Arcy, looking round with a most alarmed countenance, "you totally forget that your servants will hear you."

"You don't think they did, I trust?" replied the lady, in a suddenly rational tone of voice.

"There's no telling,—I wish you would learn to be quieter,—you know I hate scenes."

"Be kind to me then, George," was said by the lady in an imploring tone.

"Oh of course; but you are so very unreasonable, and you have no sort of discretion; I cannot stand it—you compromise me as well as yourself, and by your folly you lose your reputation, and, some of these days, your husband will be as wise as you choose to make the rest of the world. But this is not all; I must, in kindness to you, express now, as I have before done, my determination to give up our intimacy. The world will talk, and if it would not, you would force it. The end must be something unpleasant, and I wish to save you from that, and also myself from being the object of your greatest hatred, as the cause. You never will remember that the race of Lydia Languish is extinct; that is, they have long ceased to be the fashion; and as you are particularly a lady of fashion, this part does not become you at all. I do not want to offend you, but you do oblige me to tell you that I never could see wherein consisted your misfortunes. You have always dwelt upon them, and out of common complaisance I would not always contradict you; but really——"

"What!" at length exclaimed D'Arcy's companion, "is it not enough to be married to a man I cannot endure?"

"Then why did you marry him?"

"I was persuaded into it."

"And allowing you were, then, is your husband's whole life to be the sacrifice of your weakness of mind? But who persuaded you?—the most indulgent of parents, if I knew anything of Lady Glanmore : her sole desire was to form your happiness, so that, I will answer for it, had you preferred it in the very least degree, you might still have been Miss Glanmore, with a very legitimate right to make as many men unhappy as you could, instead of the one most illegitimate object of your present caprice."

"You are very severe, Mr. d'Arcy; and from you, at least, I did not expect——"

"If I am, I beg your pardon—I feel I have no right to be so; but I can't help wishing, for your own sake, to point out where I think you exaggerate your miseries; and you remember you declared it was against them that you said you clung to me for refuge. I must observe, then, that the most objectionable feature which I discover in your husband, is the very tie which unluckily binds him to you, and that had you been Mrs. d'Arcy, things would not have been so different as you imagine; except, indeed, that you would have to struggle with poverty, and probably have envied the lot of the mistress of this comfortable house."

"Do you conceive me to have so base a mind? And is it thus I am appreciated?" demanded the lady, indignantly.

"Not at all base; but you interrupt me. What I was going on to say is, that, with your very peculiar disposition, you would probably have disliked whomever you had married, and that therefore it would be wiser to hate less indiscreetly, and to feel some little gratitude to the man who submits with so good a grace, and, *en revanche*, bestows all that both his fortune can afford, and his kindness dictate."

"Yes, but he adores me; and if he is well behaved to me, it is to please himself."

"It is an agreeable species of selfishness, however, and of a kind that may fluctuate. I was going to say, also, that upon my word and honour I do think your husband is actually many degrees better than most of that class, and positively I see nothing in him to justify your unconscionable train of sentimentality, a little in the falsetto style, and which may one day meet with a harsher

reproof than I could find in my heart to bestow on so beautiful and young a lady as you are."

"I hate flattery; and what have you been saying all this time?—wanting me to despise myself?"

"To correct yourself, say rather, and to learn not to undervalue the advantages you possess. Life is short, and the season of youth is shorter—the past cannot be recalled. If there is anything to regret while you are young, it is wiser to remember it as little, instead of as much as you can; when middle age arrives it is yet time enough to despair under the accumulated miseries of a life without one solid grievance; for, believe me, things are more equalised than you suspect, and, having seen a good deal more of the world than you have, if it will be satisfactory, I can assure you I know few people whose fate seems so happily cast as yours, and that throughout my experience, I have not met with one case of perfect bliss; besides, if you have small annoyances from other people's faults,

*"Tous ces défauts humains nous donnent dans la vie,  
Des moyens d'exercer notre philosophie."*

"Are you going out as a missionary to convert the Zealanders?" asked the lady, scornfully.

"My dear friend, do not be angry with me; yes, I am going away, though not as a missionary, and it is the fact of my departure which makes me try before I go to remind you of a few sources of consolation, not for my absence, but to correct the misfortunes for which you originally requested my sympathy."

"Much have I obtained it! whither turn against the ingratitude of the whole world?"

"I am certainly not ungrateful," answered D'Arcy, apathetically; "if I were, I should not have made myself so disagreeable during this visit. It is in gratitude for the many pleasant hours you have enabled me to pass that I have said these undisguised truths, and which there is nothing so easy as for you to forget; and if you like to have lovers, who knows better than I the swarm that would solicit the honour? I only wish you to make the most of your advantages, or, by making you feel that you have some, to prevent your imprudence, which threatens to ruin you."



“ And you abandon me? ”

“ No there is nothing to justify your putting it in that light. I am simply obliged to leave England. ”

“ And supposing you were not? ”

“ Why ask me that question? ”

“ I do, and will have an answer! ”

“ In that case, — my not leaving England, I wish to remain your friend as much as you will permit me, but nothing more. ”

“ In short, you never have loved me. ”

“ It is of no use returning to that old attack, and now, too, especially. ” D'Arcy rose to take leave, and then the lady with a little of the dignity she had not hitherto shown, exclaimed, “ At all events, I have liked you—loved you : that you believe, I hope, or I must be without excuse in your eyes. ”

“ I do,—that you have thought so, at least; but as I do not think that, *au fond*, I am the person, as a lover even, most likely to suit you, I fear the time will come when you will wonder over the bygone days of your youth, and at your *aimable* condescension towards so great an admirer of one of the very prettiest persons that exist. ”

D'Arcy, with these concluding words, hastened to leave the room.

“ Stay, oh, stay one moment ! ” cried the handsome lady.

“ It is better not, you will enslave me still ! ” answered D'Arcy.

“ But you must tell me, do you think me a fool, or depraved, or what? I like to know what people think of me : above all, are you in love with some one else? ”

“ I do not think you a fool, I do not think you *quite* depraved, ” said D'Arcy smiling, “ and I cannot help being much interested in the happiness of one so young, and whose fate is held in her own hands. ”

“ But if you would guide me ! No. Yet, after all, is it not worth while to be loved by me ? You pretend to admire me, and you know my affection for you. Alas ! ”

The lady sighed, and played with the rings on her fingers, and then took up a pocket-handkerchief with Mathilde embroidered in old English letters, and in gold, in the corner. Mathilde swept the handkerchief across her eyelids, leaving them still sufficiently bedewed to touch, if possible, the heart of D'Arcy. But D'Arcy

was not new to scenes like the present, and a long acquaintance had made him perfectly *au fait* with the character of Mathilde; and he, two or three times in his life, had gone through the seething cauldron of a lady's wrath, to whom a man declares, not his eternal love, but the respectful friendship that for both their sakes he proffers in lieu of it. How is it that ladies are always so angry when this very handsome compromise is proposed to them? for friendship among themselves they have been known to rave about: but women are such contradictory creatures!

"You forget," said D'Arcy, remembering himself, so as to respire a most melodious sigh, meant as a little galanterie to the half-wiped tears—"you forget I am leaving England so shortly."

"But you can come back, and in the mean time correspond, that is, if you will swear to fall in love with no one else."

"Oh, no, I will swear nothing; you would then, you know, think it was out of respect to my oath that my heart remained faithfull, and then love and fidelity, according to your creed, are so involuntary; so I will swear nothing except, to the end of time, that you are a most lovely lady, with the very dearest eyes! I will call again—adieu—for the present I shall be out of town!" And pretending not to hear her further remonstrances, the *ci-devant* lover rushed down stairs, and, jumping into his cabriolet, drove rapidly away.



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CHAPTER XIII.

“ Oh, Love! what is it in this world of ours  
Which makes it fatal to be loved? Ah! why  
With cypress branches hast thou wreathed thy bowers,  
And made thy best interpreter a sigh?  
As those who doat on odours pluck the flowers,  
And place them on the breast—but place to die;  
And the frail beings we would fondly cherish  
Are laid within our bosom but to perish.”

BYRON.

D'ARCY drove to his lodgings, and was soon lost in the perusal of a letter he found awaiting him, with a most important official seal. It was from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, to cancel his previous appointment, and to confer upon him one that he most desired, that of Secretary of Embassy at one of the foreign courts. Owing to some peculiar circumstances, he was requested not to lose time, if possible, in setting out for his destination, as the former secretary had died suddenly, and the principal attaché was on leave of absence to attend a sick parent. In short, the ambassador was represented to be in a most difficult situation; and D'Arcy saw, in return for his appointment, he had nothing to do but to obey the order he received to the very letter, and leave England within four-and-twenty hours. There was a post-script

from the Minister—"To save time, as I shall be at Tarsley House, could not you ride down there by five o'clock ? I could then give you final instructions, and you will be ready to start as early as may be to-morrow."

D'Arcy looked at his watch ; it was half-past four : he ordered his horse instantly to come round, and muttered to himself, "As early as may be to-morrow !" For a minute he stood still, as a man does, doing nothing, when he is suddenly oppressed with an overwhelming tide of business. A thousand ideas rapidly crossed his mind—Violet—his new appointment—the ambassador—the steam-boat—Tarsley House—letters that must be written—debts that must be paid—sundry articles that must be purchased—his landlady ; all these, and a thousand other things, persons, and events, crowded on the mind of our hero. Once more he rang his bell, and gave his servant as many directions as he conceived it possible for him to execute during his ride to Putney.

"Understand," said D'Arcy, "that to-morrow, by twelve o'clock, I shall be on the Dover road ; therefore all delay must be out of the question. My horse is at the door, I see ; I shall be back here by six o'clock."

D'Arcy galloped—galloped as fast as the knight who galloped "away, away, away !" although there was no lady on the tower to wave to him "her lily-white hand."

The quick pace at which he rode accorded agreeably with the hurry of his mind—not that D'Arcy was unused to this species of mental turmoil : his life had been an active one, and a spirit of recklessness had led him into many an intricate path. Some people twice live their lives. *Their* every-day existence is one of romance and novelty ; and it is inconceivable the variety of events and interests in which one person may find himself forced to take a part : there are others, again, who go through the world so steadily, so unconscious of the very natures of half of those who compose it, that they may be said to sleep their lives away. Well, I do not know ; I am old now, and I have passed a strange and a stirring life ; but I have sometimes envied such men their calmer hours, their absence of restlessness, and the avoidance of that breathless amount of excitement which wearies the spirit at last,

and gives it a longing for repose—like the traveller in the desert, desiring the water which eludes his search.

Few joys, indeed, can compensate for the endless anxiety attendant upon a life of excitement, and the mental exhaustion which is its certain consequence. Like gambling, an existence of this sort becomes fatal; you cannot return to quietude: if you do, the ennui of an ill-regulated mind fills up, and horribly, the vacuum. But so it is; and some there are who never repose, whilst others are mere active dormice, capable of enjoying all things that can be enjoyed, and getting on in years in a most luxurious manner, refreshing themselves continually with their own excess of contentment: then, there are those who are never calm, with whom the earth is so busy a stage, and their part in it so filled up, so wearying, so harassing, so variable, so wild, that now and then they long to barter life,

“To be trodden under foot, and mingled but with dust,”

for the sake of peace and quietness at last!

D'Arcy thought of Violet Woodville. She was the one thing prominent in the chaos of his meditations. What plan to pursue to see her, if ever, again?—or, to quit England and leave her to forget him—or——D'Arcy's horse, and himself, and his reflections were checked in their course by the turnpike on Putney Bridge, and also by a gig, occupied by a couple who had precedence of him. D'Arcy was too near this vehicle not to distinguish its occupiers, and to discover an undeniable side-view of Mr. Woodville's face, as he turned to pay the gate-keeper.

“Mr. Woodville!” cried D'Arcy.

“Why, it's you, Mr. d'Arcy,” returned Woodville, making way with his horse: “I did not hope to meet you on this road.”

“I am riding down here on business. I am going——” D'Arcy hesitated: it may seem strange; but so it was, that he had not the power to finish his sentence—he could not say, “I am going to leave England to-morrow.”

“You are going——?”

“Yes,” replied D'Arcy, absently; “yes. But where are *you* going?”

"Oh, we—I and my wife are going on a visit, to see a sick friend of ours."

"Poor Mr. M'Gory, whom you must recollect at Covent Garden," broke in Mrs. Woodville; "he performed Macbeth and King Lear, and was so famous, you know, for the way in which he said

"Blow winds, and crack your cheeks;"

and now, poor man! he is laid up with the gout, and cannot live, we fear; and he is an old friend of ours, and I and Woodville thought we would drive down, and see him. Violet's left at home, for we——"

"Violet's at home?" repeated D'Arcy.

"Yes, you see there's not room for her; besides——."

"Oh, it is no great thing to leave her to amuse herself for half a day," interrupted Mr. Woodville; "we shall be back by ten at night, and it will be such a comfort to poor M'Gory to see us: he has got the snuggest little cottage at Richmond, as big as a nut shell, and just the article for him."

"Well, then, I will not detain you," cried D'Arcy. "Good morning, Mrs. Woodville."

"Good day to you, sir," said Woodville.

"I hope you will have a pleasant ride, Mr. d'Arcy," rejoined Mrs. Woodville; "and we hope you will come and see us soon."

"What the d——I must you needs add that for?" said Woodville, sharply, to his wife, as D'Arcy and his horse vanished from view.

"Don't be cross," replied Mrs. Woodville; "one must be civil sometimes—besides, one is not to live without hearing people's voices, I suppose; he is not a vulture or a hippopotamus, to eat us up, Mr. Woodville. How the wind blows my bonnet! Bless me! look at all those sheep; why, what business have they in the high road? This is the high road, is it not Charles?"

"To be sure it is."

"Do, pray, take care; I am so afraid of the horse taking fright at these sheep. What's the good of all that new police, if a whole drove of sheep are allowed to be on the high road, with only two

boys to look after them—shameful! Oh, dear! don't whip him, Mr. Woodville, for fear."

"Be a peaceable woman for once," ejaculated poor Woodville, "and never mind the sheep; and I will mind the horse."

The sheep had not disturbed D'Arcy or his steed. On they went till they reached Tarsley-house, and D'Arcy was speedily shown into the library of the Minister, who was in the act of locking some of the important red boxes.

"Give that to the messenger directly," said the noble lord to the servant who announced our hero.

D'Arcy was obliged to attend to all that was said to him, and the alacrity of his comprehension, and his undisguised intention to make his visit as short as possible, were equally agreeable to the Minister. "He quite understands I have not time to say things twice over, and that a long visit is a great private nuisance," said the peer to himself. "I hope to heavens he does not see what a hurry I am in!" thought D'Arcy; "but I shall just have time—or if I could overtake that messenger, I could get into the chaise—but it is too late—that mare of mine is touched in the wind—fool that I was to buy her!—rascal to have sold her to me!"

"You have so clearly expressed yourself, my lord, that I believe I am already capable of transmitting the sense of your instruction to Lord——; and now, I shall be able to leave town by twelve o'clock to-morrow, which will enable me to reach——"

D'Arcy's eye wandered to the large clock on a lapis lazuli table.

"Why, I am aware you are not a person to lose time on the road," said the Minister, smiling condescendingly.

A few more words were wasted in thanks and grateful speeches from D'Arcy, and amiable expressions from his patron.

Mounted once more, D'Arcy flew as breathless as his horse, with their mutual speed.

He dismounted on reaching his lodgings, and jumped into a hack cab.

"Run with these letters to Vere Street—there is time yet. If any one calls, say, in an hour I am sure to be at home. Have you executed all the commissions? And go to Newman's—the post-horses must be at the door, and the carriage packed. Don't for-



get the books, by ten to-morrow," were D'Arcy's last words to his servant.

To be sure, if we could but foresee the events of the next twenty-four hours, how the consumption of breath might be spared!

"Drive your best, my friend, and I will tip you double," said D'Arcy to the cabman.

"That's a gemman, Sir; you shall see as I knows how to make him start a point," responded his companion.

The cabman stopped by his directions at the end of the street where the Woodvilles lived, and he proceeded to the house on foot.

"Is any one at home, Mrs. Hummings?" said D'Arcy, insinuatingly, when that worthy woman opened the door to him.

"No, Sir!"

"No!"—D'Arcy's heart beat—"No! but some of the family?"

"Well, Sir—but I am ashamed to let you in."

"Oh, then, *she is* here," exclaimed D'Arcy, as he gave the usual fee to this tractable *she Cerberus*, and moved on into the passage.

Violet was sitting alone, busy with her own thoughts, and they all centred round one point. She was not sorry to have been left at home by her parents; no one is sorry to be alone when the mind is much occupied. But the Woodvilles had now been gone some hours, and solitude always gives a melancholy turn to our reflections.

Perhaps, too, our ideas become half exhausted, from the time we study them, and then they assume that fainter hue which I have before spoken of, when things seem almost unreal, and we sigh over baseless apprehension and a vague distrust. Violet thought of D'Arcy, and dwelt upon him more than ever, for more than ever she loved him. She sat at the open window recalling the past, and dreaming over bygone moments.

Sometimes her eyes wandered to the chair, or to the table, or to some article of furniture which D'Arcy had touched; and her eye dwelt upon it.

There is nothing like love for bestowing a charm on the merest trifle. When the eye falls upon the most insignificant object where a beloved hand has rested, it is the same, as dear and as

sacred to us as if the grave in its solemnity had closed o'er the parent, the sister, or the fondest friend, whose form we have remembered as hovering there. Oh, there is nothing so reverential as the endearing tie that binds to the commonest spot, if love has trodden there, its most unheeded step!—and the stones of the very pavement are hallowed and sacred in our sight, if the foot of one we love has pressed them.

The evening was drawing to its close—Violet did not choose to send for lights: she preferred remaining by the open window, keeping watch over the retiring day, at that hour—

“ When pensive Twilight, in her dusky car,  
Comes slowly on to meet the evening star.”

She looked out on the heavens. Her view was a limited one—to gaze on the stars in a house in London streets does not sound very romantic, but the blue sky was equally above her, and its vast expanse is so soothing to a contemplative mind, it gives so wide a field for thought, and there is so much hope in that blue vault of an hereafter, dwelling for ever unmoved above us, as one thing fixed and immutable! “ Shall I meet him there?” thought Violet—her mind's eye fixed on futurity. “ There shall we meet, or must I part from him on earth, and cease to hope?”—

“ If that high world which lies beyond  
Our own, surviving love endears,  
If there the cherished heart be found,  
The eye the same, except in tears.”

BYRON.

The solitude she was in, enabled Violet to distinguish easily the tread of hasty footsteps,—could it be her parents, returned home without her having heard them arrive? She rose, and the next moment the door of the apartment flew open, and D'Arcy appeared before her.

“ Mr. d'Arcy!” exclaimed Violet, in astonishment.

“ Yes, I am come to see you once again; but perhaps for the last time,” answered D'Arcy, as he advanced into the room.

The evening light was gradually obscuring the apartment, and to D'Arcy the only visible object in it was Violet Woodville, standing, and uncertain how to act. Extreme pleasure was the most natural feeling at first beholding her lover, and it prevented her reflecting upon the impropriety of his visit at that hour, and when she was alone. Violet did not ask him to sit down, and she was yet bewildered by his presence,—when D'Arcy approached, and hurriedly addressed her; his manner was passionate and eager, and his face was flushed, although he seemed fatigued.

“Do I offend you,” he said, “by being here? But, if I do, you will forgive me, for I am come to bid you farewell,—and for a long time; perhaps for ever!”

“Oh, Mr. d'Arcy!” said Violet, reproachfully, but turning pale at the same time, “you are joking.”

“I wish that I were, but it is no joke.—I am speaking in sad and sober earnest; so, Violet, you will forgive my abrupt intrusion, will you not?” continued D'Arcy, with gentleness.

But this announcement overpowered Violet; she burst into tears, as she had done once before on a like occasion. In vain she tried to speak: she sat down, and hid her face in her hands, and sobbed convulsively.

“Dearest!” said D'Arcy, while he knelt at her feet, “do not grieve so for me, or if you do,—Violet, I cannot bear to see those tears, I shall weep too; and I shall suffer more than you do. Violet, give me that little hand,” and D'Arcy forced away the fingers that were stemming the flow of Violet's tears; he took the hand and kissed away the drops.

But even this action passed unheeded by Violet, and her bosom seemed bursting with its anguish. D'Arcy waited till she was calmer, and it was not till the violence of her grief was exhausted that she spoke.

“I am ashamed, Mr. d'Arcy, that you should have seen this; my folly is too great, but,—but is it true?”

D'Arcy, in reply to this interrogatory, without circumlocution explained the necessity for his instant departure.

“You will return?”

“No,—why should I?”

“Is this, then, your affection?” asked Violet, almost with anger.

"Listen to me," answered D'Arcy, as he still knelt at her feet. "I am going to leave you; and the bitterness of my despair will ever be unknown to you,—your mind cannot comprehend the wretchedness of mine now. Your single regret at my absence will be as nothing, compared to my endless sorrow, which will live while I live,—for life itself is old with me, and you are all to me,—all—my youth,—my hope,—my every joy,—the only thing my soul desires,—the only one that I rejoice in,—I cannot look forward, I have exhausted every charm the world possesses,—only you are my world,—not this one, Violet, but a better one, and I am going to resign you! Do you hear me, Violet? look at me, dearest, and speak to me with your eyes, at least!"

Violet looked at her lover, and his mournful countenance seemed to give assurance to his words.

"You have broken my heart," was her earnest and sad reply, "and you cannot do more!"

"Do you love me so well?"

"Oh, yes."

"Fly with me, then!" exclaimed D'Arcy, with sudden fire; "fly with me,—give me the only proof of love a woman can give; you shall not repent it,—I will adore you while I live, and if I die, I think my spirit would break its bonds to watch over you! Fly with me, and in the universe,—which will be a chaos without you,—you will be all in all to me; I could not have another hope—I could not know another happiness. Fly with me, and I will teach you the boundlessness of my affection,—fly with me, and be worshipped by a heart that owns you for its very religion! Fly with me, dearest, I will for ever kiss the earth that your foot shall tread upon. My own Violet, dearest, dearest one! oh, have you heard me, have you listened to my beseeching cry?"

"Tempt me not," Violet exclaimed, "it is cruel in you, and you are becoming my worst enemy." The agitation of her voice denoted the intense pain of mind that she was enduring; and her beautiful face, beautiful still with its streaming tears, was bent over D'Arcy, with the expression of an angel pleading for compassion.

"If you know me, as you say you do, could I ever look on the world again, when I had known disgrace? and my father, and my mother, to bring them to hear my name with shame! my poor

father,—oh never, never !” screamed Violet, endeavouring to extricate the hands that D’Arcy forcibly detained.

“ It shall be no shame, then ; all should be done,” cried D’Arcy, “ you should be my wife,—my wife, do you hear me, dearest ? all shall be sacrificed,—why do I say sacrificed ! humbly offered to you ; for you nothing would be a sacrifice, did I resign my existence to obtain you,—you cannot doubt I would do it gladly—say you know it to be so, my beloved !” said D’Arcy, imploringly ; and at that moment he spoke the truth, and its powerful evidence carried conviction to the mind of the unfortunate girl ; yet she answered him with determination.

“ Oh, no ! young as I am, my experience is sufficient to save me from that misery,—I your wife ! you the husband of an Operadancer !—no anguish can be so great as to become the object of your contempt and despal ; and, as your wife, you would condemn me more for the ruin I had brought upon you, than you could if I should forsake my home, my parents, and my honour, to follow you. No, Mr. d’Arcy, I love you so, that I would not marry you,—you see I know you,” said Violet with a wretched smile.

“ Generous angel ! believe me, you are mistaken ; you never have appreciated my affection, and are incapable of probing the depths of my devotion.”

“ But, in cooler moments, you have explained all to me. Your position, your views, your fortune—and I have weighed well every little word you have ever spoken. If you think, at this moment, that I am mistaken in my views of what yours would be were you to marry me, trust to me that I know you better than you know yourself. Is it really to-morrow that you depart ?” asked Violet, with a faltering voice.

“ To-morrow ; but you must go too, indeed you must—you would not abandon me, Violet ? Can I say more ? —I have offered all that man can, and now I kneel, and I ask you for your pity—Forsake me not !” cried D’Arcy, imploringly, and he buried his face in the lap of Violet, while his quick drawn breath and broken sentences betrayed his agitation.

“ Do not kneel to me—leave me alone, for God’s sake !—D’Arcy, do you hear me ?” said Violet Woodville, and with her slender

hands she tried to raise her lover from his kneeling posture.

What a world of misery was tearing the hearts of these two persons ! What passions were contending in that little sitting-room, the abode of cheerfulness hitherto, and of family comfort ? How the very furniture of the room, with its air of locality, was in ill accord with these striving spirits ? And when scenes like these occur in our own homes, they seem such a strange profanation ! and, hereafter, the remembrance of them stalks like a ghost across the heart of our dwellings.

Oh ! who that has a heart will not lament over the grief of such moments—the parting of those whose existence is each bound up in the other's, for at this moment it seems so ; and to feel they may—

“ Not meet again ! what tongue can tell  
The pang of hearts that love so well,  
At such a chill unwelcome breath,  
Like vapour from the shades of death ! ”

D'Arcy recovered himself, but he saw his advantage. He pleaded all that passion urged him to—he prayed, he wept, he adjured her to follow him—what did he not say—for,

“ What will tongue not dare  
When hearts go wrong ? ”

But it is not enough to destroy the force of virtue in a young and upright mind, guided by an excellent understanding. The feelings may be rent, but the very nature of a man's violence in such a case alarms the timidity of one that is pure-minded, and gives the power as well as the desire to resist such entreaties.

Violet Woodville mildly persisted in her refusal to follow the fortunes of D'Arcy, but her heart was breaking while she spoke. And then he changed his tone, and reproached her with selfishness and with deception—“ Yes,” he exclaimed, “ you have deceived me. I put your affection to the test, and what has become of it ? The world's opinion, forsooth, stands up before it. You wrong no one, but you may wrong yourself ; and where is your boasted love

for me? You say my absence will grieve you, and to me you prefer your parents. What have they done for you more than the laws of nature have forced upon them? What if they have loved you—do not all parents love their children?—and when they have lost you, will their sorrow come up to the tenth part of my despair, when I am alone, with my memory of you for my only pleasure, and your abandonment for the solace of my unhappiness? Oh, that I could despise the heartlessness that mocks my anguish!” And D’Arcy, striking his clenched hand against his brow, paced the room with a tempest in his bosom.

“But I would brave it all,” said Violet, following her lover’s footsteps;—“The world’s contempt—I could be pointed at for you, D’Arcy—I would leave my home, were it necessary; I would beg for you—believe me, D’Arcy:” but D’Arcy answered her not.

“I would encounter disgrace; but my father and his misery, his affection—to know I had so rewarded it—but, for you, D’Arcy, I would do it all;—and the upbraidings of my conscience—I would stifle them, for you.—But would my God ever forgive me if I deserted my dear, dear father?—D’Arcy, do you hear me?”

Violet appealed to her lover in a tone of anguish that obliged him to turn towards her: but the cold sneer, which could blight the countenance of D’Arcy, hung in withering coldness on his features, and that was his only reply.

“And is it you, D’Arcy, who can show so little kindness! This is worse and worse, and I cannot survive it,” exclaimed Violet, but meekly;—sinking upon a seat in utter dejection.

The unkindness of D’Arcy terrified her. He beheld in her countenance the nature of her feelings, and, restored to tenderness by this means, he once more flung himself upon her generosity.

“Do you think,” he asked, “my love can do nothing for your happiness? How am I to believe you care for me, if you place so little faith in my affection? Oh, Violet, can you not conceive some happiness in having me ever devoted to you, and anxious to save you from all evil? Bound to you by gratitude, and a passion that has not its equal—and watching over you as if you were my young child, but dearer far than all human ties could make you? Can you picture nothing to yourself but misery, if you go through life

with me? My dearest one,—my love,—my only joy—Oh, listen to me, and think how I have loved!—is it not true? I would not always have asked this sacrifice.—Did I not tell you to marry Stanmore? Did I not force myself to see you no more: and if now I am weak, and if I am grown so selfish that I dare to ask so much, am I not to be pitied? Oh, I have many faults, but if I ever knew virtue, it has been while loving you, for I could go mad..... Violet, I will not, I cannot part from you.” D’Arcy seized the hands of Violet, and covered them with convulsive kisses: “Be mine—my wife—any thing—but be mine. Oh! by what prayer shall I adjure you!”

By this last appeal Violet’s heart was almost vanquished; but she was still checked by the feminine delicacy which ruled her character so conspicuously, and which made her feel that, independently of the laws of duty, the eloping with her lover was an open act of impropriety that her nature shrank from. To an understanding constituted like hers, such a step would have been one (even if to be sanctioned by a marriage) that she would naturally have turned from with dismay; but to fly with him to be his mistress only,—no wonder that her heart, gentle and confiding as it was, and with its deep tenderness, should require to undergo all the ordeal of D’Arcy’s anguish before it could relent for such a purpose.

She was not misled, or allured, by his offer of marrying her: she never proposed to herself to accept the offer, and placed at once to its right account the sacrifice D’Arcy was ready to make. Violet had never forgotten his conversation with Harcourt, at a time when she did not know him.

Subdued at length by her compassion, but virtuous to the last, Violet flung herself at the feet of D’Arcy, and in trembling accents asked him for his forbearance.

“Have mercy on me; ask me no more, or, if you do, I must consent to fly with you; my courage will abandon me, but do not think that I can live in disgrace—never! I must die; but I will go with you, if you require it, now, D’Arcy,” continued Violet, more tremulously; “I am doing what is wrong—I shall hate myself some day. Oh!” continued the unhappy girl, “would you leave me, and save me from such horrible disgrace. Think of my



parents, and I am their only child, and they believe me spotless; and they will have to hear that I have fled from them to wander as your mistress! Oh, horrible!—Was I born for such a fate as this?"

Violet hid her face. She was still kneeling at the feet of D'Arcy, and, regardless of his endeavours to raise her from the ground, she seemed almost unconscious of his vicinity; but her situation did not move his heart in the way it might have done. He was reckless then, and could only pour forth vows and prayers.

"I will go—I will go!" murmured Violet.

In an ecstasy of delight, D'Arcy would have clasped her in his arms; she made no effort to prevent him, and then he discovered that she had fainted!

D'Arcy was horror-struck: all his feelings underwent a revolution. Men are not accustomed to see women faint, and it always inspires them with alarm; but D'Arcy knew that what he beheld was his work. When he entered that room, Violet Woodville was there in her bright beauty, his own *beau idéal* of woman's loveliness, wanting nothing in his eyes—

" Ni les lis, ni les roses —  
Ni le mélange exquis des plus aimables choses ,  
Ni ce charme secret dont l'œil est enchanté,  
Ni la grace plus belle encore que la beauté," —

and now he beheld her pale, cold, and senseless!— And he it was who had stamped those features with the hue of death, and so bruised an angelic spirit that it had sunk beneath his violence!

D'Arcy was suddenly restored to calmness: he felt then the force of his own misconduct, and was dismayed at the ungenerous use he might have made of the advantage he had gained. He felt certain that, except under the high-wrought spell that he had been employing, nothing would have induced Violet to consent to become his mistress; and at this moment, when the fever was over, his very love upbraided him for his selfishness.

"She is not fit to be betrayed in this way; she may hate me for it," said D'Arcy, inwardly; "I can now vanquish myself — be it so; she shall not be mine at such a cost; she shall not reproach me with

the crime of her seduction. I will leave her—I will persuade her no more; the fault would be *all* mine.”

D'Arcy employed himself in restoring Violet to consciousness. He took her to the open window, and bathed her temples with eau de Cologne. She recovered slowly; and when she did so, he was bending over her, hardly less pale and cold than she herself was. He was not the same creature he had been while lately raving in the delirium of passion; and if his feelings were as deep, they appeared to have assumed another form. When he thought Violet had nearly revived, and saw she began to remember the cause of her over-excitement, D'Arcy led her gently to speak upon the subject.

“ I am so very miserable, ” said Violet ; “ but you are not going to leave me for ever ? — Surely I have been dreaming that ? ”

“ My darling love, forgive me, ” answered D'Arcy. “ When you think of me hereafter, it must not be in anger ; and do not think of me — I do not ask it, love. Be happy, if you can : it will render me, perhaps, less wretched. You see, Violet, I am not so bad, ” continued D'Arcy, trying to smile, and he kissed her hand fervently ; and then before she was aware of his intention, he quitted the room.

But when the door had closed upon him, Violet Woodville cried out — “ Gone ! ” and a wild scream hovered upon her lips. Her head swelled with a degree of sorrow which has nothing in common with words or with tears ; her utterance was choked, and stifling sobs were heaving her bosom with their bursting throes. She flung herself upon the floor, and would have died then, for hers was the grief that brings recklessness of all things else in the world ;—her despair was infinite ! D'Arcy was gone ! Oh, what a burden life seemed ! and how frantic was that wretchedness, unable to struggle with such an excess of grief !

It was such a helpless, hopeless sorrow — to see no more the cherished object of her deep affection ! The darkness of a grave would have seemed less appalling than this curtain of woe cast over all that so feeling a heart held most dear.

To live but for one, to dream of him, to speak of him with rapture, to thrill when the music of his name is heard, to know what

heaven is in his presence ; to exist by his remembrance, to listen for his very breath, because his breathing is more to your existence than your own; to worship his faults, to know them, and to love them with infatuation; to devote your whole nature, your aspirations, your hopes, your thoughts, your whole soul,—to surrender all, to cast all at the shrine of one object, and to know that suddenly it is withdrawn from you, and you may never see it more;—oh, reader, if thou hast been spared such an anguish, think not that thy burden in life has been great,—be not misled, overrate not your afflictions, or rashly compare them with such as these. In a different sphere, with more resources, with companions more suitable to her, — with admirers, with parents, with society more fitted to a mind like hers, which rose above its sphere of action, Violet Woodville would not have experienced the intense and overwhelming sentiment which shipwrecked her happiness so utterly. She would have had more causes to distract her attention; the greater variety, and the more splendid circumstances of her existence would have stood in the way of the single-heartedness of her passion. That, in higher life, affections like hers are formed, there can be no doubt; but the great world exercises a command over those who live in it, which it never relinquishes. We may hate it, despise it; we often do, but, though we would abandon it, the world will cling to us; and with an iron sway, and often, perhaps, a wholesome one, it grapples with our best and our worst feelings. We fear its irony, we so dread its pity, we dare not be unlike all others, — for who is exempt from yearning to seem as he sees all others are, to rejoice sometimes like his fellows? and variety, the world's variety, when we are so situated that we fall in with it, comes betwixt us and that vivid, overpowering, uncaring devotion which rages and devours the springs of life itself, when it finds a home in a bosom like Violet Woodville's, not counterbalanced by the ten thousand events of a more selfish existence.

From the relative positions of Violet Woodville and her lover, all that more immediately concerned her and the occurrences of daily life, had become either circumstances of no import, or grievously irksome; they were not in common with D'Arcy, and she could find nothing to destroy the spell that was gathering

round her. Violet literally liked Lord Stanmore, at last, only because he lived in the same set, and was one of those with whom D'Arcy associated.

It is always bad enough, under the best auspices, to lose at last a happiness we have created for ourselves, and in which we are blindly trusting — “ *Perdre un bonheur rêvé, renoncer à tout un avenir, est une souffrance plus aiguë que celle causée par la ruine d'une félicité ressentie, quelque complète qu'elle ait été.* ” \* And then, too, when we are young, we have so much to give, so much energy to prostrate at the altar of our misery! Violet's affection, without knowing security, had acquired that sleepy confiding belief in the duration of happiness, such as it was, on which we all rely, more or less. This reliance is part of our nature, and forms, as it seems to me, one of its mysteries.

“ *Il n'y a point de hasard ; tout est espérance, ou punition, ou prévoyance, ou récompense.* ” †

The lamps were lighted, and it was quite dusk when D'Arcy left the house of the Woodvilles; about ten doors onwards this street was intersected by another, and for D'Arcy to pursue his way it was necessary to go over the cross-road.

It so happened that two hack cabs were at this moment disputing the pass; one of the drivers conceived his vehicle to have been injured by the bad driving of his adversary, and with a plentiful flow of slang they were blackguarding each other on the spot.

“Hold your clapper, there, and don't kick up no bobbery with me, or I'll dish your prad nicely for you, my boy; don't give me your clankers, and sneak on, I say.”

The rejoinder being much to the same purport, there seemed little chance of a peaceable termination of the dispute.

At this moment D'Arcy's attention was forcibly called to the disturbance, and in an imperious tone he desired the drivers to move out of the way, in order that he might pass; at the same minute a man, who was being driven in one of the vehicles, put

\* Balzac.

† Voltaire.

forth his head, and mingled his remonstrances against this stoppage in the street.

"Settle your quarrels as you will, but if you don't drive me on, I will give you both over to the police. Did not I tell you I had not a minute to lose? drive me to the Burlington *directly*," exclaimed the inmate of the cab, most vehemently.

"Very well, Sir, you shall be bang up in a crack, only I a'n't such a woolly crown to let that 'ere yelping whisker-splitter think as I am to be bammed because he is more up in the stirrups than I, and I am blowed if I don't—"

"How long, Sir, am I to be detained here by your drunken quarrel?" cried D'Arcy, with an angry burst of passion. The scene, so out of harmony with his feelings, made him give way to his temper.

"Mr. D'Arcy it certainly is," said the unlucky inside passenger of the cab, as the light of the lamp fell upon D'Arcy's face. His recogniser, however, did not appear well known to D'Arcy, or at all events he walked on without acknowledging him. He had matters of business to transact, and, late as the hour was, D'Arcy felt they must be concluded before the morning; and in order to write letters, he went to the 'Travellers'.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

"Untaught the useful lessons sadly given  
By that time-honoured sage—Adversity,  
The rash impetuous, and misguided youth  
Resents at once the slightest injury—  
Unmindful of the consequences, seeks revenge—  
Repenting, when too late, the deadly evils  
Wrought by the pride that brooks not contradiction."

OLD PLAY.

"Duels to be respected, must be fatal :  
I am not bloody-minded, but I hate all  
Parade of valour—playing with edged tools,  
The scorn of brave men, and the boast of fools.  
There may be an exception ; but at school  
We learn that the exception proves the rule."

ANON.

ABOUT nine o'clock on the evening previous to D'Arcy's intended departure, Lord Stanmore was sitting in a room in the Burlington Hotel. His cabriolet had been waiting in the street some time ; he was going to join a party of his friends who were dining at Richmond, and he knew, although it was then nine o'clock, that he was still likely to find them not dispersed. For the twentieth time within the last hour Lord Stanmore rang the bell violently.

"Is my servant not yet returned?" he demanded of the waiter.

"No, my Lord—stay, my Lord, I think I hear his voice on the stairs now;—Mr. Cramp is here, my Lord," said the waiter, making way for a very smart gentleman in pumps bespattered with mud, a blue and silver waistcoat with a gold chain, and a frock-coat some inches shorter in the skirt than most other people's: his disordered hair, the moisture on Mr. Cramp's face, and his hurried gait, did not quite correspond with his *dégage* toilette, and he commenced making excuses for not being within at an earlier hour.

"Sir!" exclaimed Lord Stanmore in an angry tone (his temper was not as docile as it used to be)—"Sir, what is the meaning of my being detained here because you choose to disobey my orders?"

"I beg your pardon, my Lord, it has been owing to an accident, my Lord, intirely."

"Nonsense! I told you to be here by eight o'clock; you knew I wanted those cigars; this is the second time, but it shall be the last, that I have been disappointed in getting those cursed cigars, owing to your ill conduct."

"My Lord, I assure you it is not my fault; I got into a cabriolet, and another driver ran against the wheel of the cab, and there was a dispute—," Lord Stanmore made a gesture of impatience.

"I don't believe you. Bring the cigars, if you please, now."

"Certainly, my Lord; but I hope your Lordship will be good enough to credit my word; if not, there's Mr. d'Arcy, my Lord, and he saw me."

"Mr. d'Arcy is not in London."

"He is, indeed, my Lord; I saw him; your Lordship can ask him," continued Mr. Cramp, disappearing in search of the cigars. On his return with them he repeated to Lord Stanmore that Mr. d'Arcy would vouch for his story not being a fabricated excuse. "It was just up at Bayswater, my Lord, where I have been sometimes with messages that your Lordship was particular in, to Mrs. Woodville, my Lord."

"And you did not see Mr. d'Arcy there, sir?" asked Lord Stanmore, with a low voice and a flashing eye.

"Yes, it was not above fifty yards from their house," Mr. Cramp eagerly replied, "when these drunken fellows set up a row, and I looked out for the police, which made me notice Mr. d'Arcy coming out of Mr. Woodville's; I did not know it was him at first, till I heard his voice speaking to the cab-men to let him pass; he will remember it, I am sure, my Lord, and will justify me to your Lordship."

"Are you positive that you saw Mr. d'Arcy coming out of the Woodvilles' house?"

"I am full positive of it, my Lord; if your Lordship think, for the sake of hexcuse, I would tell you a falsehood, why then, my Lord——" said Mr. Cramp, drawing himself up in a dignified attitude.

"I should like to know how it is," (Lord Stanmore was trying to speak calmly,) "it only being once, certainly not oftener, that I sent you with a message to Mr. Woodville, and it is long ago, you should remember so very well which of those houses belonged to the family—at dusk, too, and when you were not near enough to read the numbers?"

"Oh my Lord, why it did so happen that I knew the house particularly well, because I took the grouse your Lordship sent this very morning to Mr. Woodville; my business lay in that direction, and John was in a great hurry about a little matter of his own; so, as I was going that way, to haccomodate him I took the grouse into the homnibus with me, and got out and left it myself at Mr. Woodville's, by which way I happened to know the house again; it is a himitation rose-wood painted door; all the other doors are different. Mr. Woodville was not at home or his lady, honly Miss Woodville; and Mr. and Mrs. Woodville was gone out for the whole day, the woman said that let me in, and that they was not to be home till very late; and that was true, for I met them both in a one-horse gig here in Park Lane not ten minutes back."

"What, after you saw Mr. d'Arcy?"

"Oh, Mr. d'Arcy must have been gone on his way for half an hour before I got to Park Lane, for when the man did pretend to be driving me on, the other fellow he had quarrelled with raced after him, and so then I jumped out and called the police, and——"



"That's enough : you are, however, clear in having made no mistake about Mr. d'Arcy?" repeated Lord Stanmore, in an accent that was almost tremulous.

"The lamp fell on his face, my Lord, I could not make a horror, and I heard his voice, telling the men to get out of his way. Is your Lordship's cabriolet to wait?"

"No, send it away—stay—yes, let it wait."

In about half an hour Lord Stanmore gave orders for his groom to drive with a letter to — Street, and to wait for the answer.

The letter was directed to G. d'Arcy, Esq.

The groom soon returned, saying he had left the letter, that Mr. d'Arcy was not yet come in, that his servant expected him to be late, as he was going to set off for abroad next day at six o'clock, and had a great many things to do which would occupy him in different parts of the town.

"Abroad—going abroad?" said Lord Stanmore, thoughtfully.

"Yes, my Lord, so his servant said."

"Oh, you must have misunderstood him."

"No, my Lord; and there was nothing but portmanteaus and packages in the passage, and tradespeople. There was Mr. Occult, as is your Lordship's tailor, and a man with Hindy-rubber cloaks: it seemed like going somewhere in a sudden."

"To-morrow, at six o'clock?"

"Yes, my Lord, the servant said so; it was Mr. d'Arcy's own valley I saw."

"Umph! you may go, drive my cab round: be in the way with it, if you are wanted."

Left alone, Lord Stanmore remained lost in reflection. He considered for a long time, and several times his hand was upon the bell, but he did not quite pull it. At length he did pull it, and sent for his cab. He left the hotel, leaving word where he was going, and that if any letter should come for him it must be brought to him immediately.

About one in the morning D'Arcy returned to his lodgings. The passage gave nearly all the evidence of the departure that Lord Stanmore's groom had so eloquently described; only "Mr. Occult and the Hindyrubber" gentlemen, and several more of that species, had given way to the suggestions of impatience, and instead of

themselves, their foremen were in waiting as their representatives.

D'Arcy's tables were strewn with letters fastened with wafers; while boxes and leathern cases covered the floor.

With a tired hand he proceeded to open some of these wafered missives—that is to say, bills; and to listen, or to appear to listen, to the details of his servant: “I will light the lamp, Sir—Mr. Occult has left his account with me, and I have promised to give it to you—and Mr. Spring said he had made some little repairs to the case of your new gun, Sir, that were not in the bill, he thought, Sir;—and I took the box to have the Bramah's lock put.—Will you have something, Sir?” asked D'Arcy's servant, interrupting himself.

“Something! What?” answered D'Arcy, sternly.

“You look so ill, Sir, I thought you were fatigued, Sir.”

“Oh! go on—did you go to the right watchmaker's!”

“Yes, Sir—but he says he ought to be keeping the watch a day or two, so I brought it back; and I went to Treuttel and Wurtz, and they are to send the French books this evening, and if they were not able to get them, they will forward them to you by the Foreign-office, and I called at Andrews' about the Quarterly, and I paid the bill at Hookham's.—Oh, and here are the letter covers, Sir, and I have seen about the patent lamp; and I left your message at Tattersall's, with a man there that I know; and I have been about the carriage, and spoke to Barker as well as Hobson—and all your letters and notes, I have seen to their being sent, and—Oh, Sir, here is a letter from Lord Stanmore; his groom brought it, Sir, a couple of hours back.”

“Give me the letter,” said D'Arcy, and, with surprise and impatience, he tore off the envelope and began reading.

“Madame Vestris went to Calais yesterday, so I left the note, Sir, and Lord Arthur is not at Knightsbridge-barracks. Oh! and the pistols are all right now, Sir; and here is the old road-book I have found, Sir, and the map is not torn; and all the other things, I need not give you the trouble of mentioning to you, but I think I have seen to nearly every thing—I went into Bond-street about the razors, and—”

“Leave me, Howell, now,” said D'Arcy, “I have something to attend to.”

“Yes, Sir,” answered Howell; but he was attached to his mas-

ter, and his worn appearance still attracted his notice as he left the room.

There was nothing very restoring in the letter D'Arcy had just opened. It was a charge made by Lord Stanmore, accusing him of having broken his promise in again attempting to see Miss Woodville, and calling upon him, if he could, to deny it. In conclusion, he declared himself ready to give the satisfaction of a gentleman, should D'Arcy think proper to resent his present interference. It was, in short, a most angry letter, couched in the cold language of one trying not to appear angry. If any man could read with perfect calmness a summons like this to life or death, as it might be, that man was George d'Arcy. He was endowed with both physical and moral courage to a most unusual extent, and was incapable of a nervous pang. In fact, so well was D'Arcy aware of his own nerves and his moral inaccessibility to fear, that he rather felt himself gifted with an undue advantage over his fellow-men, of which he would not for the world have boasted; and now, at this moment, he felt careless of life, so that there was no hesitation in his proceedings, as there might have been at a happier period. He wrote two notes, one to Lord Stanmore, stating, in few words, that his departure on that morning could not be delayed, that he had no doubt of both being able to find seconds; and requested Lord Stanmore to meet him at five o'clock. D'Arcy named the spot. The other note was to a friend, an acquaintance rather—to ask him to be his second. These dispatched, D'Arcy threw himself upon a couch, desired the light to be withdrawn, and that he might not be disturbed for one hour.

His orders were obeyed : at the expiration of the hour Howell entered the room.

"Oh!" exclaimed D'Arcy, passing his hand across his brow, "Bring me a light; and now for the letter you have in your hand."

D'Arcy read it—it was from Lord Stanmore, who promised to find a second, if possible, so as to be on the ground at the hour D'Arcy required, five o'clock—it was then half-past three.

"Get me some fresh ink," said D'Arcy. "If any one asks for me, show him up. You may go to bed, Howell, only leave word to admit any one, with some servant below."

D'Arcy had few near relations; there was no mother, father,

or brother, to whom to bequeath his final injunctions, or to whose tenderness he desired to make a last appeal : but he had some friends. He might be inclined at this moment to value friendship lightly. Almost his most intimate friend had requested to have the opportunity of shooting him that very morning. D'Arcy wrote only two letters, one of business, and one to Violet Woodville.— These were only to be sent in case of his death. A servant ushered in Sir Lewis G.

The table at which D'Arcy wrote was littered with papers. Not choosing that the address of the letter to Violet should fall under the eye of a stranger, he had intended to enclose it in an envelope, addressed to Howell, on whom he could depend, with directions for its deliverance only in case of his death. But, on the abrupt entrance of Sir Lewis G. (for the servant remembered D'Arcy's orders that, however late, any one asking for him was to be admitted), D'Arcy caught up the letter to Violet, as he thought, and hastily put it under its cover. At the same instant, his eye fell upon the minute-hand of his watch, which lay before him : he saw it was past four ; he felt he had no time to lose—he sealed the envelope, and did not discover that, instead of enclosing the letter addressed to Miss Woodville, he had taken up another which he had written in the morning to a friend at Doncaster, and which he had forgotten altogether ; it was sealed—he did not, at the instant, take the unnecessary precaution, as he conceived, of examining the address.

“ Mr. d'Arcy,” said Sir Lewis, “ you are acquainted, I know with the nature of the errand upon which I am come ; I am ignorant of the cause of this unhappy quarrel, and, in fulfilling the part which Lord Stanmore has imposed upon me, I would give a great deal to be the bearer of some explanation.”

“ I am much obliged,” said D'Arcy, interrupting him ; “ but in this instance there can be no explanation. The aggression was made by Lord Stanmore. I, however, am the offended party, to a greater extent than he conceives himself to be—so that it is impossible to settle this dispute but in one way. I have written to Charles Crofton, to ask him to be my second. I know he is in town, for I met him last evening ; but there is so little time. Have you pistols, Sir Lewis ?”

This question Sir Lewis answered in the affirmative.

"That will do—I told Crofton to procure them, and I fear it is that which is delaying him. Stay, I hear him now.—Crofton," said D'Arcy, advancing towards a handsome youth, who had entered the room, "that's a good fellow—I'll do as much for you another time."

"I see," said Sir Lewis, "I have only to take my leave. Mr. d'Arcy, you will find my principal on the ground as soon as yourself—at least, if he should not be exact, it will not be his fault."

"Oh, Stanmore will be there, Sir Lewis; I would have given him longer time, but I am under orders to leave England, and no excuse for my delay would be received at the Foreign-office, as I could not give the real one. Perhaps you will be good enough to explain this to Lord Stanmore?"

"Certainly," and, bowing, Sir Lewis left the room.

"My dear D'Arcy," said Crofton, "what have you been quarrelling about?"

"I cannot very well tell you—but I think Stanmore is in the wrong. However, I cannot explain. I never was so sorry for any business in my life. Oh—but you do not mind being my second, Crofton?"

"Mind! I would do it for you every day in the week, if you asked me, D'Arcy; but you and Stanmore were such allies,—something could be done to prevent——"

"No, and for that very reason, when friends quarrel, you are quite sure the quarrel is an irreconcilable one. When I have fought with Stanmore, I may like him better than I do at this moment—but fight him I must. Good God! I have forgotten to order my cab—we shall be late—never mind, we may meet with a coach: that chance is better than waiting. Crofton, we must be off."

To avoid giving rise to suspicion, the two friends went out of the house by means of D'Arcy's key, and with rapid steps pursued their way to ——.

The grey mist of a September morning was still perceptible in the atmosphere, and there is, even in the vicinity of London, a freshness and sweetness in the air, at that early hour, which is not in accordance with ugly undertakings of any sort; I think at early

dawn it always seems as if the day were still too young to be giving birth to deeds of evil. However, these fastidious observations probably did not enter the minds of the four gentlemen who were assembled—some to shoot at each other, and the others to aid and abet them in so doing.

Lord Stanmore had been thinking of his sick mother, and of her doting affection for him. He had many near relations besides to whom he was attached, and though he had met with offences, he was more angry with the world than hating it. His conscience, too, told him that he had been precipitate in the wording, at least, of his letter to D'Arcy. Since he had heard of his intended departure for the Continent, he could not feel certain how far his former friend might be guilty, and whether he was justifiable or not in wishing to take a last adieu of the Woodvilles. D'Arcy had been his greatest friend, and now he was on the point of a hostile meeting with him.

Lord Stanmore was impetuous and spoiled, though noble and generous at the same time: the more he feared he might be wrong, the more he desired to assure himself he was in the right; and when he beheld D'Arcy, he was obliged to redouble his inward reassurances, for he feared lest his arm should shake when he held the weapon that might deprive his friend of existence. "I will not fire in the air," said Lord Stanmore to himself, "but I will purposely miss my aim."

The seconds measured the usual twelve paces, and placed their principals on the ground.

D'Arcy was thoughtful. "If I fall," said he, inwardly, "I should like this matter explained to Stanmore: he thinks I have broken my word."

"Are you ready, D'Arcy?" asked Crofton.

It had been arranged that they were to fire together, at a given signal, taking aim beforehand, or not, as they pleased.

Lord Stanmore raised his pistol carelessly, wishing to miss his antagonist. D'Arcy, on the contrary, deliberately pointed his weapon at the heart of his opponent.

It was an awful moment, for he was either barbarously or ostentatiously levelling his pistol with a murderous precision. The instant they stood thus proved sufficient to show their positions to

Crofton, who was a very young man, and to induce him to break through all rules, and to obey the impulse of his heart, by rushing up to D'Arcy, and exclaiming, in an under tone—

“Stanmore is evidently not aiming at you, D'Arcy; are you bent on hitting him?”

“You will see,” was D'Arcy's brief reply.

Crofton regained his ground, and the signal for firing was immediately given.

The time it took for Crofton to speak to D'Arcy was the affair of an instant, but it had disarranged Lord Stanmore's aim—his attention was diverted at a moment too critical, and when the rapidly-given signal was made, his hand proved unsteady, and, unaccountably as it seemed to him, he shot D'Arcy in the side.

D'Arcy was likely to prove more exact in executing his intentions. Lord Stanmore was younger, more inexperienced, and swayed by softer feelings; D'Arcy was a practised shot; he had before fought a duel, and his mind was previously more resolved, his sentiments more harshly strung. So, when he fired in the air, much as it was at variance with his demonstrations one second previously, there was no reason to conclude that his design had been changed at the moment of its execution.

“My wound is not dangerous,” were D'Arcy's first words to Crofton and Lord Stanmore.

A surgeon, who was in waiting at a convenient distance, was called for.

“This is horrible!” said Lord Stanmore, with much feeling; “and God is my witness I did not mean it: and you, D'Arcy—you fired in the air!”

“I meant to do so,” answered D'Arcy; “however, you have not hurt me much. You moved your arm when Crofton spoke to me.”

The surgeon approached, and examined the wound.

“It is not dangerous; that is, it may not be,” said he.

“Thank God for it!” exclaimed Lord Stanmore, and a load was taken off his mind.

D'Arcy was too weak to move without assistance; he was supported to the surgeon's carriage, and conveyed to his lodgings, and thus for the present ended his departure for the Continent.

"Your going up to D'Arcy after I had given the first signal was contrary to all rule," said Sir Lewis to Crofton, as they walked to their respective homes, after the proceedings we have described.

"I know it was," answered Crofton, "but what man could have forborne in such a case? I thought the devil must have been in D'Arcy, and if he had hit Stanmore he would have been very sorry afterwards. I really thought he was under some delusion."

"I believe he never intended otherwise than as he did," rejoined Sir Lewis.

"Then why choose to assume such a different appearance?"

"I don't know. D'Arcy is singular sometimes. I think he was very angry with Stanmore, and that he determined to exasperate him if he could. He saw directly that Stanmore was not going to shoot him, and he would give him no encouragement to abstain."

"Well, he is an odd fellow—D'Arcy."

"So I think," returned Sir Lewis, as he and Crofton separated at the end of the street.

Violet feigned illness the day following the last eventful evening. Mrs. Hummings aided her in this deception, for that excellent woman felt considerable uneasiness lest the Woodvilles should discover her having so easily admitted Mr. d'Arcy, when they were not at home.

"I shall send to Mr. Camphor, I think," said Mrs. Woodville to her husband; "Violet seems quite ill."

"You had much better; but she wants change of air more than old Camphor. I must see and take you all to Ramsgate or to Broadstairs; Margate is more to my taste, but——"

"Oh, Margate is so very vulgar! Brighton is the only place to my fancy. I always think all other sea-side situations disagree with me; the air is too keen, and my lungs yet too delicate with being on the stage."

"Don't talk that nonsense to me, Lætitia," said Woodville, impatiently; "say outright at once that Brighton is a gay place, and that therefore you like it better than Ramsgate or Broadstairs. I am sure I don't care—you may have it your own way—only Brighton is dearer. However, I hate screwing. So, to Brighton let us go. Poor Violet! it may amuse her too. I am often unhappy now,



when I look at that child; she is not as she used to be. I wish to Heaven not a gentleman in London had ever set his foot in my house," continued Woodville with a sigh; and his wife hastened to change the conversation; she knew that it was taking a turn that often sufficed to sour her husband's temper for the whole day, and it was almost the only circumstance that could do that.

"I think M. Dupas will go also to Brighton, and we might take a house together, and be very comfortable. I like the West Cliff."

"Have you sent for Mr. Camphor?"

"Yes;—I am sending, that is."

"Do it, then, or I shall walk to Mr. Camphor's myself, it is the only way to get a thing done in this house; what a dawdle you are! The child is ill, and you just *talk of doing* a thing;" and with a displeased manner Woodville quitted the room.

When Camphor arrived, he proved of more use than he was in the habit of being, for though he neither knew of, nor could relieve, the unhappiness that was weighing down his young patient, still he discovered that she was feverish and wanted rest, and he therefore gave her some effervescent draughts, combining an opiate, that would procure her a couple of hours' repose. Her room was darkened, and Violet was left alone, by Mr. Camphor's orders; and under the influence of his medicine she fell asleep. In about two hours she awoke, refreshed, and with a little recovered energy,—enough, at least, to desire to get up, and to assure her parents she was better,—nay, quite well.

The Woodvilles were engaged this evening to drink tea with Mr. and Mrs. Augustus Octavian, of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden. Woodville desired his wife to go, while he remained at home,—Violet urged him not; and the kindly dispute was ended by Dupas, who came in to pay his usual visit, and declared that he should stay with Violet, and that, as she was not well, one person's society would be better for her than that of two. Poor Woodville made many an inquiry about her health, and gazed upon his child with the most earnest looks of solicitude.

"You are feverish still, my poor little darling," said he, taking her hand.

"No, dear father," answered Violet, heavily; "no, I am much

better ;—go with my mother, and don't think of me,—I shall be so well to-morrow."

M. Dupas tried to amuse Violet; he talked to her, and offered to read out to her " Adèle et Théodore." This offer was accepted because it saved her the trouble of talking, which she felt quite unequal to. M. Dupas therefore emitted from his lungs, with patient unction, about half a dozen pages of Madame de Genlis' *tiède* French sentiment, when he was disturbed by a sigh. Such a sigh! a low and quivering sigh; the sigh that can convey such real evidence of wretchedness.

The old man heard it with a beating heart, for he was shocked with the conviction of the great unhappiness of one so dear to him. He turned round and beheld Violet Woodville leaning with her arm upon the table. Her face rested on her hand, and was turned from him; but there was sadness in her very attitude, and she was so abstracted that she did not even take notice of the pause in his reading.

Dupas waited, in order to see whether she would not speak; but his silence occasioned no observation, and he was persuaded that his pupil was unconscious of it.

" Were you amused by my reading?" said he.

" Yes; you are tired, I fear," answered Violet, rousing herself, with an attempt to smile, and then her lips contracted again, and resumed their former expression.

It is well known that the muscles of the mouth have more to do with our feelings than any other feature of the face. The eye can look clear and bright while we are mentally suffering. The forehead may not show its marks of care, and with an effort all our features may seem composed, and with them we may deceive those who are not close observers; such, however, will discover in the lips, in the lines of the mouth, the involuntary evidence of the mind's action. And when, in the hour of grief, we do smile, what a wretched smile it is, and how quickly the pale lips go quivering back to their true expression!

" No, I am not tired, but you, *mon enfant, vous l'êtes*. There is always consolation when we do that which is right," said M. Dupas, slowly,—for he was speaking, not to what Violet had said, but to that which her countenance was

telling, while, with a penetrating eye, he watched its workings.

"There is, I hope," answered Violet.

"We have all our sorrows, or we have had them," continued M. Dupas; "and when they are irremediable, it becomes us to exert ourselves, and to remember *que le bon Dieu* sends only the trials that we ought to withstand,—that he is the dispenser of all our griefs as well as of our joys; and so, when we are broken-hearted, *il y a toujours Dieu, et sur lui on peut se reposer : il nous aime quand le monde ne nous aime pas, et quand nous n'aimons pas le monde.*"

"It is hard to have so much to bear when we are young."

"But it is in the time of youth the lessons of God will make the most impression. They are sent us then to form our characters, and to steady us for the years that are to come.—*En tout, et pour tout, la Providence a raison.*"

"I will endeavour to think it is so," replied Violet, in a tone of the very deepest dejection; "only it would be better to die, and to be spared our sorrow."

"My child, that may seem true, but without knowing sorrow would you be fit to die? you would have given no proof of virtue."

A letter was brought into the room at this moment. It was addressed to "Miss Woodville," and in a hand-writing she did not know. She opened it with a presentiment of evil, which was not extraordinary, for her nerves were shaken, and were ready to give way to every possible impression of ill that could be devised; and women's nerves are wonderful diviners in that way sometimes.

She opened the letter. It was an envelope enclosing a small folded note, and a letter besides, sealed with D'Arcy's arms, also addressed to her, and in his hand. On seeing this Violet grew pale: she felt she could not conceal her emotion, and rose to leave the room. M. Dupas observed her without remark: he felt his interference could hardly be of use; but, at the same time, there was a mystery hanging over this child of his adoption, which cruelly disturbed the old man.

In the mean time Violet was alone, and reading as follows:—

"You will only receive this in the event of my being fatally

wounded. I could not leave the world without saying a farewell to one whom, I fear, I may have injured. If you loved me, Violet, you have had your excuse; for no man ever tried more to win a woman's heart; and if in this I have proved your enemy, I have had my punishment, for I have loved in vain — *and I have loved.*

"What I have felt, you will never know; for you may be the victim of feeling, but not of passion.

"And now, Violet, forgive me, if, for your sake, I endeavour to destroy the illusion I have helped to create: it is the only reparation I have it now in my power to make you.

"Believe me, then, dearest, when I tell you to build no more upon the romance of life, and despise not its dull realities.

"Be certain it is better to esteem fully, than to love fully. You are young: time is all before you, and it is your duty to exert yourself. Forget me, for my sake; there are better men than I am; and I could be contented, were I but assured that your future fate would be in the hands of one of honourable character. Remember this. May Heaven bless you, my beloved one!

"G. D'ARCY."

On first reading this letter, Violet was so shocked at the commencement, that she hardly entered into its full meaning: when at last she comprehended the force of the opening paragraph, she rent the air with a wild scream. It was heard, and the servants and M. Dupas hastened to her room.

She was sitting on the floor, with the most haggard expression of despair. The letter was in her hand. On beholding her old friend, Violet jumped up, and threw her arms round his neck.

"Save me! Save me!" she exclaimed.

"From what, my child?" said M. Dupas, terrified at her manner.

"Oh, save me!" she continued, in convulsive accents.

"But from what?—Speak; parlez, mon enfant."

Violet sank down, and threw herself at the feet of M. Dupas.

"He is not dead," she gasped. "Save me from it!—It must be that I am deranged!" cried the poor girl, in broken accents, burying her brow in one hand. M. Dupas saw the letter she

held in the other. He took it from her, and perused it; while he did so, he knelt down by the side of Violet, and held her hand; she gazed up in his face, with a terrible expression of anxiety.

"Mais il y avait encore une lettre?" said M. Dupas. Violet made no answer; she did not understand him. The old man discovered on the ground the folded note he remembered to have seen her take out likewise.

"Ah, la voilà!" he exclaimed, and read it, while his countenance brightened.

"Eh bien," said the old man, with delight; "je vous l'ai bien dit, il ne faut pas se désespérer. Il vit, ma chère—calme toi."

When Violet heard these words she burst into tears, and M. Dupas wept likewise.

The note was from Howell, and couched in the following words :—

"MADAM,—The enclosed was given to me by Mr. d'Arcy, and forgotten to be sent in time with his other letters. My master was in such confusion of business, setting off, and particularly myself, that I have forgotten it sooner. I think, Ma'm as you will have heard of Mr. d'Arcy fighting with my Lord, that I may be so bold as to make free to tell you, Mr, Brodie thinks master will do well, and is not in no danger. I hope it is not of consequence my forgetting the letter.

"Your humble obedient servant,  
"J. HOWELL."

Violet's were tears of joy, and M. Dupas's were for joy too. He was too kind-hearted not to be relieved by ceasing to behold the distracting anguish of Violet Woodville.

The letter which he had read so opportunely, and which Violet had totally overlooked, was, as we have seen, from Howell, D'Arcy's servant.

As soon as the first excitement caused by his master's disaster was over, Howell, still fearful lest he should be blamed for previous neglect, aware, as he conceived himself, of the importance D'Arcy attached to any letter to Miss Woodville, forwarded this

one to her, without additional delay ; and with the amiable desire of relieving her anxiety, in case the news of the duel had reached her, he enclosed the specimen of his calligraphy which has been presented to the reader.



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CHAPTER XV.

" The maid that loves  
Goes out to sea upon a shattered plank,  
And put her trust in miracles for safety."

VIOLET met with much kindness from her parents. They sympathised, in some degree, in her distress, and, being ignorant of D'Arcy's true conduct to their daughter, they were willing to be very glad when they heard that he was likely to recover,—especially as they were then aware that he was intending to proceed to the Continent.

M. Dupas alone guessed how deeply Violet's happiness was involved by D'Arcy. But he knew now of no remedy, and, with genuine good sense, he wished to spare her from family reproaches and advice, which are never so unpalatable as when they have become useless.

Day after day Violet solaced herself by reading her lover's parting letter, and, day after day, her affection sank deeper in her bosom.

His duel and his danger had endeared him to her. Her terror at the idea of his death had almost deprived her of reason, and she began to have a fear of the force of her own feelings. So strange and so inconsistent is the human heart, that, independently of her love for D'Arcy, she began to feel for herself at last, and



a kind of nervous selfishness came over her. She dreaded the horror of her own mental sufferings, and often said to herself, in the event of a further separation, "I could not bear it!"

Then, and not till then, was Violet Woodville in danger of falling. It was now that she required a friend to support and to console her, to rouse her moral courage by assurances of that great truth,—that we are never called upon to endure more than we are equal to contend with, and that where there is weakness there is guilt. But Violet Woodville had no friend to do this, since her father and mother were in comparative ignorance of her situation. M. Dupas, if he understood it better, could scarcely act, for, while she had received his advice, she had never made him her confidant; consequently, he knew not of her moral danger.

Violet wrote to D'Arcy,—the letter was wet with her tears. She besought him to assure her himself that his life was safe. Hummings took this letter, and brought her the answer, and from that day Violet indulged in a clandestine correspondence with her admirer.

As he got better, her spirits returned,—she looked happier than she had done for a long time,—D'Arcy's letters were the cure to her mind,—she gave way to the bliss of receiving them,—and on these letters Violet might be said to live. Poor Violet! it was so great a relief to her not to be so oppressed with such an Atlas-like load of despair.

She hoped again!—what she hoped she knew not, but she did hope; and if in hoping she was sinning, we must believe her guilty. How often in life should we not call on death to end our woes if it were not for the undefined trust that gently leads us on, and softens all our sorrows! Man may bless his God when he solaces him with hope.

Violet was informed by D'Arcy of the origin of his quarrel with Lord Stanmore. This, likewise, riveted her chains. D'Arcy, then, had received his wound on her account, and tears filled the eyes of Violet whenever she remembered this fact.

Her father now proposed moving to Brighton, and the heart of his daughter bounded with joy, for, as soon as he was able, D'Arcy was to proceed thither for his health.

The Woodvilles took one of the small houses on the West Cliff, in one of the back streets leading up from the shore. Mrs. Woodville was excessively happy in being at Brighton, and Woodville was very well pleased likewise. They met with some of their London friends, and Mrs. Woodville liked frequenting the libraries of an evening, and hearing the bad singing, and putting her half-crowns into a lottery-box, and rejoicing over the sixpenny article she received, as she well earned recompense. Then she liked shrimps for breakfast,—to be sure, in October they were scarce, but, *en revanche*, they had excellent whiting, and the potatoes were so good at the sea-side, Mrs. Woodville declared. The walks on the Esplanade, too, had a great charm for her. And then, the Octavians and Mr. Brown arrived one day, and took up their quarters at the large boarding-house over Wright's library. Besides these, it must be owned that their friends of another kind were scarce. There was, to be sure, the one London dandy, who is always to be seen about Brighton. There never is but one, *par parenthèse*,—two at the same time were phenomena not to be met with. The present dandy was not an acquaintance of the Woodvilles; but they heard of him as living at the Albion, and frequenting the club, and playing *écarté* with a rich and vulgar Mr. Canterbury, a retired wax-doll maker; and they saw him occasionally lounging about with one hand in his pocket, and blowing his nose, when it blew hard, with a cambric pocket-handkerchief.

The Woodvilles were one day walking on the grass terrace before the Brunswick houses, when they were first met by Mr. Brown; and the greeting between him and the elder Woodvilles was very affectionate.

"Well, you could not have done a pleasanter thing than this, Mrs. Woodville," said Brown, injuring his boot heel by repeatedly knocking it with a thin and elegant stick of painted black wood, surmounted by a brass knob, — the whole intended to represent ebony set with gold.

"Why, I am fond of sea amusements," answered Mrs. Woodville; "and so much of London as we have —"

"Oh, yes; but such good taste in you not to go to Margate! Upon my word, the vulgarity of that place, Miss Woodville!—Let

me advise you never to go there. No; I," said Mr. Brown, pompously, "*I* was going to the Continent—I like to go occasionally to Europeanise myself; but Spada wanted to come here. — You know Signor Spada?"

"What! the second tenor at the Opera?" asked Woodville.

"Yes; he is a creature of great genius."

"Why, Laporte did not think so."

"Oh!" answered Brown, with a gesture of contempt, "Spada is a man of talent, and of the warmest feelings; but he abhors England, and if it had not been for me, would not have come to Brighton."

"Then, I think," answered Woodville, "you had better have gone to the Continent, Brown, as you intended, and Spada with you."

"Ah!" replied Mr. Brown, casting his eyes at Violet, "but I must own to having many little reasons, that were inducements, I may say laws, to prevent my going abroad."

"I shall be very happy to know Signor Spada," said Mrs. Woodville. "You can introduce him to us?"

"I certainly will. His only fault is, that he will copy me. I often say to him, — 'My dear Spada, my style does not suit your Italian physiognomy.' But he is invulnerable; and will persist in dressing after me, and acquiring my — my — my style—ways, you know, peculiar to me. All people have their style, I believe, and it becomes ridiculous when another person endeavours to—but Spada is a very good fellow. Poor wretch! he is passionately in love with the most beautiful woman — a Countess. I forget her name — he did tell me — but who lives at Florence. Her husband threatened to stab her, and Spada left Italy. She broke her heart, and is probably dead by this time."

"Time she was, if her heart was broken," said Woodville.

"Oh! of course, I mean figuratively speaking. Spada, however, does not seem to think she can be alive."

"I suppose you mean to stay some little time at Brighton?"

"Oh, Heavens!" said Brown, "yes, for ever, I would stay, could stay, if ——" He sighed, but the sigh was not

heard ; for a puff of wind just then blew it the way it was not meant to go.

" Well, we make it out very pleasantly. We have been to the theatre once or twice. There's a pretty good company here now."

" Mr. Bobbs is coming too, I hear. I own I am surprised at his thinking of engaging himself at this place."

" He is quite right, if he can make money by it," observed Woodville.

" The Octavians told me," said Mrs. Woodville, " that the manager was not at all a *gentlemanly* man."

" Indeed! — Ah! I am glad you told me," replied Brown, thoughtfully; " for I had some idea of appearing for a night or two, but I will not think of it."

" Oh, it would not be worth your while : they have bad audiences."

" What, then, it is low altogether?"

" Oh, very, I think, for gentlemen like Bobbs and Signor Spada. Don't say I said so; Mr. Bobbs might not like it; he is so particular."

" Oh! dear me, no; but I will warn poor Spada, lest he should think of engaging. I am looking for him now, but I rather think he is taking a warm bath."

" I am glad of it," said Woodville, who disliked foreigners. " He looks as if he would be none the worse for it—no offence to your friend, Brown."

" Oh!" said Brown, " I know your joking ways, Mr. Woodville."

" Yes, but I am not joking," answered Woodville.

M. Dupas had taken the house at Brighton jointly with the Woodvilles, and consequently was now living with them.

" I wish," said Mrs. Woodville, one rainy day, when she was sitting in their small but pretty parlour, and had got the vapours, " I wish Violet would grow to be more like what she was, M. Dupas."

M. Dupas took out his snuff-box, and crossed his legs.

" Charles looks cross about her, as if I could help Mr. d'Arcy's duel," Mrs. Woodville resumed, after a pause.

"Oh! she was changed before Mr. d'Arcy's duel," replied Dupas.

"Well," said Mrs. Woodville, opening her eyes, "but it was not my fault."

"*C'est selon,*" answered the old Frenchman, shrugging his shoulders.

"Why, I am sure *I* did nothing to make me answerable for her being in love, or any thing else."

To this there was no assent from M. Dupas, so Mrs. Woodville gave one for herself.

"I did not, that's certain. I am sure it is a most disheartening thing to do any thing for anybody's interest, even for one's own, for all the reward one gets is to be found fault with. I have no idea of Charles looking angry at me, as he did just now, when Violet took up that nasty old newspaper, and burst into tears, because she fell upon the account of that tiresome duel. It was very silly of her; only I am not displeased with Violet, because she could not help it; but it is very hard if I am to be responsible for such things as that!"

To this sensible and argumentative speech of his friend's wife, M. Dupas appeared to listen with great attention; he did not reply categorically to her remarks, but he expressed his hopes that in time Violet would recover her former cheerfulness; showing plainly that he fully entered into the anxiety of her parents.

"But it is not necessary for me to assure you of that," said the old man; "I have the same affection for Violet as if she was my child. I have no children, and all *mes petites épargnes sont pour elle; ce n'est pas un secret, je crois.*"

"I am sure, M. Dupas, you are a very kind friend to us, and we feel very grateful if you have any such kind intentions as those you speak of. As for me, I am sure I always meant all for the best; I had a natural ambition for Violet, and perhaps I was not so prudent as I might have been, but it is just luck. Violet might have married Lord Stanmore, I am persuaded; and then I should have been all that is perfect, and Charles would not have given me those sour looks that I get from him now. Oh, here is Mr. Brown. Well, how do you do to-day, Mr. Brown?"

"Very well, I thank you. *Bon jour*, Mons. Dupas. Shall you go to the library this evening, Mrs. Woodville?"

"Yes, I intend it. Perhaps you will drink tea with us first?"

"I shall be most delighted. May I bring Spada?"

"Oh, certainly."

"Poor Spada lost a great deal of money last night. That's his only failing, poor fellow! he cannot keep from the gaming-table. He was coming this morning to pay his respects to you, but he is gone to Mohamed's to be shampooed, so he will come afterwards. Have you or Miss Woodville been shampooed?"

"No; is it very pleasant?"

"It's the most exhilarating thing in the world; and really it is not expensive, as Spada says, for it is only half-a-guinea a time; and there is so much attendance required, and showers of perfumed waters — it is a luxury quite oriental, as Spada says. Spada never will go except when he can be attended by Mohamed himself. I think, M. Dupas, if you would allow me to advise, that a course of shampooing would be of benefit to you."

"I am much obliged to you, Mr. Brown; but for why?"

"It imparts a lissomness to the limbs, and gives a renewal of youth, which is the most charming thing imaginable."

"*Ah! j'en doute, cependant.*"

"Oh, my dear Sir, ask Spada. Spada declared to me, that, when he came here he was dying. The atmosphere of this country has so hurt his lungs, joined to distress of mind of a most touching nature, that his whole system was deranged, and now he is perfectly well!"

"*Corps et âme?*"

"Oh, there are some things that a man of feeling like Spada can never recover; but except that, I never in my life saw a man so altered for the better."

"*J'en suis bien aise, et quand je serai malade de corps et d'âme, j'irai pour être shampooed chez votre Turc, votre Monsieur Mahomed,*" replied the old Frenchman, drily.

The Woodvilles were out walking one morning on the Esplanade, about ten days after their arrival at Brighton: a young man was standing on the beach below the terrace, and near the water's edge. He leaned upon a stick, and bent over the waves, as they

came washing the shingles at his feet. His figure was slight and graceful, but thin, and he showed traces of sickness; his air was remarkable, and his bearing, though feeble, distinguished; his features were pale and attenuated, but finely cut; and the singular expression of his eyes was visible even while watching the rushing sea foam. But, on the whole, there was a dark cast over the brow, that seemed as if it should have been more open, and in the corner of the handsomest mouth there lurked something cold and contemptuous.

D'Arcy—for the reader will have recognized the portrait, we think—D'Arcy involuntarily turned round, and began slowly to ascend the beach, at the very moment when the Woodvilles passed on the terrace. Violet saw him; her parents did not. D'Arcy likewise beheld her, and when he did, how brightly flashed the spirit of joy on his pale countenance! Oh! it is beautiful, in man or in woman, when the soul speaks in the countenance, and the fire of the immortal spirit is called forth to light up our grosser nature, in testimony of one overwhelming sentiment. If Heaven's light shines on earth, surely it is when thus beaming in the human countenance.

And D'Arcy, too, could he have seen Violet when she first drew in the assurance that she beheld him, might have cried out with the poet—

“How beautiful the love-light of her eyes!”

D'Arcy made no attempt to approach the Woodvilles on this occasion. Some days afterwards he called upon them, and endeavoured as much as he could to render his manner such that Mr. Woodville would be forced to submit with a good grace to his visit.

Mrs. Hummings was now completely gained over, and through her D'Arcy wrote constantly to Violet.

Each day of her life was now adding to her weakness. Her parting from her lover, his duel, and the alarm for his life, had over-wrought her feelings, and they were yielding, because they did not possess the same unimpaired strength as formerly. All the better principles which stood in the way of D'Arcy's triumph were being sapped one by one.

In prosperity we often sin ; but if we do so in unhappiness, the pity of our fellow-creatures should be more freely given. We know so little of the wiles and workings of our deceitful nature, and we are so unconscious when our hour of weakness is at hand, and we are proud of our strength whilst on the brink of falling. It is prettily said by Kotzebue—" Mit dem unglücklichen sollte der glücklichen nicht rechten." Bear this in mind, my reader, and believe it is sometimes better to be merciful than just. Censure, then, but do not judge too hardly of the erring days of the poor young Opera-dancer ; and rather give way to grief than to indignation at her bending virtue. Let it also be borne in mind that she had only imbibed an imperfectly taught religion, and an untaught morality. Her actions were not swayed by firmly-settled principles. Her impulses were not under the correction of a good education ; and when this corrective is wanting, the chances are that, one day or other, we fall.

Her home had lost all its charm, and, in alternate hours of doubt and sorrow, she passed her time. Occasionally she shuddered, on reflecting upon the system of concealment she was carrying on towards her parents : virtue prevailed sometimes ; but D'Arcy had only to write of parting from her, and of his love, and she was won again to him.

There was a time when Violet Woodville would have disbelieved the possibility of her present conduct. D'Arcy now continually urged her to elope with him : he was getting well ; and, as soon as he could, he was to go to his post abroad, to relieve the person who had been temporarily appointed during his absence.

D'Arcy was too much a man of the world not to foresee that it would be better that the scandal of Violet's abandoning her home should, take place some time before he left England, lest a hue and cry should be raised against him, in his official capacity, for the abduction of a young lady of respectable parents.

On one occasion only could the lover obtain an interview with Violet. It was on a day when the Woodvilles went over to Worthing, and their daughter made some excuse not to accompany them. She then went out to meet D'Arcy, in those fields which lie at the back of Brunswick-terrace, on the West Cliff.

D'Arcy did not fail to turn this opportunity to advantage. He



had a way with him, in talking to Violet, which would have misled a person of more penetration, and one less prejudiced in his favour than was poor Violet. He showed a delicacy of language and manner towards her, which, in spite of her better judgment, blinded her to the truth. He talked eloquently of virtue, while he reasoned her into vice; and the purity of his words imparted so shining a varnish to his arguments, that their intrinsic baseness was obscured.

“ They little guess, who at our acts are grieved,  
The perfect joy of being well deceived.”

LORD ROCHESTER.

“ After all, if you are doing wrong, it is yourself you sacrifice,” said D’Arcy : “ I am persuaded that you have more merit in conceding to my wishes, than if you had abandoned me, and remained in your home. There are various sorts of selfishness : in surrendering all to me, you will have given the best proof that you are not egotistical : we shall be so happy, too, Violet. When I allow myself to dwell upon that possibly happy future, I feel such a joy within me, that, if you knew it, you could not have the heart to overturn such a dream of bliss. Dearest ! you would reproach yourself—I know you would—if you were to desert me now !”

Violet Woodville wept, and listened to these and similarly false arguments. She only felt that she could no longer struggle against the agonising fear of losing D’Arcy for ever. She condemned herself; she thought of her parents, and she remembered her God—but the tempter was by, and he would not quit her till he had extracted from her a fatal and reluctant promise.

“ And now,” said D’Arcy, in a low voice, when they parted, “ I know that I may trust you, Violet; but should you fail me, I will end my life. Listen !—I swear it before Heaven !—and I give you my word, that I live or not, according as you keep your promise. Remember ! I could not, if I wished, break my word : my life is in your hands, Violet !”

That night Violet Woodville passed almost in a state of distraction. She was seized with the bitterest remorse for the promise she had given; she despised herself—sleep fled her eyes, and the

tears of sorrow were denied her. Full of repentance she wrote to D'Arcy, and told him she could not keep her promise.

"I will not—I should live to hate myself; I do, as it is. If you have ever loved, give me back that bad promise; I must have been sunk in iniquity when I gave it, and even you must one day despise me for it. I implore you to forget it, and tell me I am free: I insist upon this, for I must not go on thinking myself so worthless."

D'Arcy's answer was short:—"You are free; but my word I shall keep—I cannot live without you!—But is it come to this?—and will you even let me die?—You may relent, and I will watch before your house: if, at six this evening, I do not see you at the middle window, my fate is decided."

Who doubts that Violet Woodville was to be seen that evening at the middle window? She believed he would kill himself. To say he would, was the commonest stratagem that D'Arcy could have had recourse to, and, unless he was sincere, one of the most paltry. Judging from what was known of his character, however, at that time, he was likely to have been in earnest in his declaration of suicidal intentions; he had little religious feeling, and not having any strong ties of affection, his disposition was of a description to make him capable of ending his life when he conceived that his desires were irremediably thwarted.



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## CHAPTER XVI.

“ Never let men be bold enough to say,  
Thus, and no farther, shall my passions stray ;  
The first crime past, compels us on to more,  
And guilt proves fate, that was but choice before.”

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“ The woman who deliberates is lost.”

THOSE little inland streets at Brighton are very comfortable places. You have not the roaring of the sea in your ears all day, or the eternal glare of its wide expanse in your eyes. The Woodvilles had, as has been said, taken a particularly pretty little house in one of these inlets on the West Cliff, and they, and M. Dupas, were much pleased with its snugness. Whenever they did not amuse themselves elsewhere, they used to have parties,—Mr. Brown, and Spada, and the Octavians, to drink tea; and Woodville had met with an old friend, who was a celebrated performer on the French-horn. They would have been the happiest people in the world, if Woodville could have watched less anxiously over his child. Her want of spirits, and her worn expression, often occasioned him indescribable anguish.

Woodville was a man of the warmest feelings, and possessed the most generous and affectionate heart. The thing he prized most tenderly was his daughter; and now he often reproached

himself as being the first cause of that daughter's dejection. He thought he ought not to have allowed her to go upon the stage, and that he was also guilty of great weakness in permitting his wife to make their house the frequent resort of men whose grade in society was superior to their own.

Woodville, however, at this time, imagined his daughter was safe from any bad designs of D'Arcy's, but he feared, and with reason, that her affections were given irrevocably; and he could not avoid thinking that Brown, and such as Brown, were not likely to remove a D'Arcy from her thoughts; and, altogether, he dreaded that it might be long before he should see his child as he was wont to do,—the blithe bird that once made his home a little paradise to him.

One evening, in the commencement of November, the house of the Woodvilles was gay with mirth and music. They had asked some of their theatrical friends to pass the evening, and Mr. Brown, who had a fine voice, was singing the 'Captive Knight' and the 'Parisienne,' and executing them with great effect.

"I must say," said Mr. Brown, "it is too provoking that Spada is not able to come here this evening."

"What's the matter with him, then, Mr. Brown?" demanded Mrs. Octavian, sharply.

"Have you not heard?" exclaimed Brown, with much surprise. "He went out hunting with the Brighton harriers, and was thrown. He is severely hurt. I advised him not to go; for I said to him,—'My dear Spada, if I were you I would not go.'"

"Good gracious! you don't mean to say he put on a red coat?"

"And pray why should not Spada put on a red coat, Mrs. Octavian?"

"Oh, dear, I wish I had seen him."

"Umph! I don't know why; do you, Mrs. Woodville?"

"Not I, Mr. Brown."

"Well, Mrs. Octavian," said Woodville, "if you have set your mind upon seeing him, we will go out and watch for the Signor some afternoon, when he will be coming home from the hunt."

"Why, I am sorry to say," observed Brown, "Signor Spada thinks he cannot stay away from Milan much longer. He had letters the

other day, which he showed to me,—of course I cannot repeat their contents; but he conceives he is called upon to make the sacrifice of his own convenience, and, for the sake of another's peace of mind, to return to Italy."

"What!" demanded Mrs. Octavian, "cannot he get an engagement with Laporte for the next season, poor man?"

"Dear Mrs. Octavian, don't ask such questions," said Mr. Octavian to his spouse, "people don't like to have their private affairs inquired into in that way."

"But the man himself is not here; I am not asking *him*, Mr. O."

"Spada has a genius peculiarly his own," continued Brown, "and must be appreciated whenever he is understood. Miss Woodville, may I ask were you not much pleased with Spada?"

"Where are you, Violet?" exclaimed Mrs. Woodville, surprised at not beholding her daughter in the midst of their little circle.

"I am here, mother," answered the faint voice of Violet.

The company turned round to look, and they beheld Miss Woodville sitting in a distant part of the room. She was leaning back in her chair, and her hands were clasped before her. She was very pale, her eyes looked red, and their brightness was gone; she did not move on becoming the object of observation, and seemed almost unconscious of it.

"Why, you look very cold, my dear," said Woodville, going up to her, "and your hand is like ice."

"Is it, father? I *am* very cold," Violet replied; and her teeth chattered.

"Come to the fire, then."

She obeyed, but the fire did not seem to warm her.

"Violet, are you ill?" asked her mother.

"No."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps you had rather not hear our talking?" said Mrs. Octavian, "and we will go."

"My wife does talk so screamingly," observed Mr. O.

"My singing has disturbed you," said Brown.



" Violet, love, what is the matter with you?" again asked the blunt but affectionate father.

" Nothing, father—nothing."

" Then it is very odd, for I never saw you look so ill!"

" No indeed; I am well, but I will sit here by the fire—it is very cold."

" Oh, then it is evident she has got a cold," cried Mrs. Octavian, " or she would never call this a cold night. Why, it is quite spring weather — so mild, so muggy all day : was it not, Mr. Brown?"

" Indeed I thought so. I went this morning, about twelve, to get a Dante at Wright's for Signor Spada, and the sun was quite oppressive."

" So it was. Well, if you don't object then, Mrs. Woodville, suppose we encore the ' Captive Knight,' and ' The treasures of the deep,' Mr. Brown."

The gentleman did as he was requested, and Violet remained by the fire. No wonder her father had said he never had seen her look so ill! She seemed grown suddenly thin, her features looked pinched, and her lips were very pale; whilst round her large eyes there was a deep black hollow line; her hair hung out of curl down her cheeks, and her figure, instead of its usual uprightness, was bent and drooping. The very sound of her voice was low and altered, and in the little she did say, the last word of each sentence almost seemed as if too great an effort for utterance—the sounds sank below her breath, and from time to time she shivered.

" Are you better now, Violet?" M. Dupas presently inquired, with his usual kindness.

" Yes, I am," she replied. " Don't let my father get vexed about me, I am not ill."

" *Non, ma chérie. Cependant, un peu d'eau de fleurs d'orange? En voici sur la table.* I will pour a little into a wine glass of my *eau sucrée*."

Violet accepted the remedy, but her hand trembled while she held the glass. Afterwards she was, or pretended to be, better; probably her nerves were a little restored by the fleur d'orange.

The party broke up, and then, when their friends were dispersed, the Woodvilles again enjoined Violet to tell them if she was unwell;

she still denied being ill, but only repeated that she had felt chilled, and that M. Dupas's remedy had done her good.

"Then you think you will sleep?" said her father.

Violet stared wildly, her lips quivered, she turned her face quickly away, and her emotion passed unnoticed.

Violet Woodville left the room; she presently returned. Her father was then standing near the piano, helping her mother to shut it; Violet said nothing, but knelt down at his feet, and stooped her head towards the ground.

"What is it, Violet?"

"I am looking for my needle-case; I have found it, I think."

On pretence of seeking the needle-case, Violet bent her head lower still. Her father retained his position, there being some difficulty in closing the piano. Violet bent down till she could reach his feet, and she then kissed them; that gentle kiss of his child was not felt by Woodville, because it was not guessed at by him; he felt only that Violet touched him, and he moved, saying "I am in your way, I fear."

She answered in the negative, and rose, pretending to have found what she sought, and once more left the room.

On that night Violet Woodville quitted her home. About one in the morning, when its inmates were wrapt in sleep, she moved down stairs; and Hummings, her treacherous ally, opened the door of the lodging-house, and accompanied her. Violet was clad in her cloak, and drawing it closely round her, was hurried along by Mrs. Hummings.

She was presently stopped, and beheld D'Arcy.—"We have a fine night, dearest," he whispered. "Give me your arm; the boat is ready."

"D'Arcy!" said Violet, in a low thick voice, "let me go back?"

"Impossible!"

"D'Arcy, I entreat you to let me go back," she repeated; but in a more faint and a more earnest tone.

"Are you mad, Violet? What, now?—not for worlds!" And, seeing her irresolute, D'Arcy hurried her on, till they reached the end of one of the streets leading down to the cliff. They went down the stone steps to the beach, about half-way up the Espla-



nade; a light sailing vessel was standing off and on near the shore, and the moon's light shone brilliantly on its white sails. A boat was hauled upon the shingle, and several sailors were standing close to it, evidently on the watch. At a signal from D'Arcy, the boat was presently launched, and, placing his two companions in it, he jumped in himself. They were soon alongside the small schooner, transhipped into it, and, the boat being hauled up to her quarter, the vessel got under weigh for Dieppe.

D'Arcy remained with his unfortunate companion three weeks at Dieppe. He then returned with her to England, and proceeded to London, where he placed her in lodgings in a respectable part of the town. He took the utmost care of her external comfort, and solaced her with every attention he could bestow.

It was not his intention to keep her in concealment. On the contrary, he was rather anxious than otherwise that her friends should discover and see her, if they desired it, before he took her abroad.

At one time he wished her to write to her parents, but the bare idea of such an act, in her fallen situation, Violet Woodville looked upon as impossible. D'Arcy had a good many things to occupy him, but there is no saying how many he did not neglect at this time for the sake of not quitting his poor victim. He was going to his post in Italy, and intended to make Violet precede him to Dover, for the sake of appearances. He felt that he might not venture to take her with him in his own carriage, lest such a proceeding should draw down animadversion in his then position.

When Mr. Woodville discovered the loss of his child, and felt the assurance of her disgrace, his anger at first rose above his grief. He could obtain no clue to her place of retreat, and only went with his family instantly to London, as her probable destination. He spent three days in fruitless search; and then, imagining she was gone abroad, he flew to the Foreign Office, to inquire if Mr. d'Arcy was in England. With much difficulty he procured an interview with one of the clerks; he could only learn that Mr. d'Arcy was certainly still in England. The wretched father had already inquired at D'Arcy's usual residence for some information respecting him, but there, likewise, he learnt nothing. He then wrote to one or two gentlemen whom he knew, and who were D'Arcy's acquaint-

ances. From them he ascertained that D'Arcy had not been lately seen in town, possibly he was at Melton. Woodville thought so too, and to Melton he went, and when in that quarter, as may be surmised, his researches were equally fruitless. He returned to his home,—to his weeping, wailing, miserable, weak-minded wife, and to his desolate fire-side:—such was now the home of poor Woodville—the home that D'Arcy had made for him!

Woodville had always said little expressive of his grief, and he seldom, even for days together, made a remark upon Violet; and as for D'Arcy,—of him how could he speak? But his face was careworn, and, though sometimes flushed with sudden anger, oftener pale with concentrated sorrow. He neither went to visit, or admitted any one. His wife felt an awe of him, and even M. Dupas—the sole exception to his rule of exclusion—dared offer no consolation.

Perhaps it was almost more touching to behold the silent wretchedness of this benevolent old man : he was unprepared for the blow, having never calculated upon Violet's elopement. He was not, however, angry,—he pitied her most deeply, and not the less because she was erring,—either his nature was a gentler one than most other people's, or the world, such as he had found it, had made it so. He, too, was seeking for the lost girl, and as fruitlessly as her father, but he did not give up the point, and would say, “ Attendons, la pauvre enfant nous donnera de ses nouvelles.”

One day when Woodville was out, wandering he knew not whither, he caught (as he thought) a distant glimpse of D'Arcy; nor were the bereaved parent's eyes mistaken : D'Arcy had then been in town four days. Woodville was full a hundred yards from him at the moment he first saw him turn down Portland Place. He hastened his pace to keep him in sight, but not to run after him; for, said Woodville to himself, if I get up with him, I shall knock him down, perhaps I shall murder him, and, out of spite, he may not tell me where *she* is, and that is what I want *first* to ascertain. It was about five on a December afternoon, and getting darker each minute, and D'Arcy was hurrying home to Violet Woodville on foot, which was somewhat unusual with him, but so it happened on this occasion.

He reached his house, and, entering, flew to Violet's room.

She was sitting bent over the fire, pale, and the tears still in her eyes, as they ever were when she was alone, but they seemed to disappear when she saw D'Arcy, and a smile of joy glittered over her countenance.

"Dearest," exclaimed D'Arcy, with gaiety, and rushing to her, "I think I am never from you but that I learn to love you—no, —not better, that I could not,—but more and more to learn how unhappy I am without you!"

"Oh!" said Violet, "I am so glad to hear you say so; for I am always dreading lest you, too, should grow to despise me, as others must do."

"Why do you wrong me with such a thought? In all that can concern either, should I not much sooner hate myself than you? Let me kiss away those naughty tears, and let me whisper to the eyes that weep them, that, for Violet's sake, and D'Arcy's too, who loves her so with all his heart, those tears must not fall;" and, as he sat at her feet, D'Arcy's hand bent her head towards his lips, and he mingled his kisses with the long, smooth, curling tresses of poor Violet's hair. The lovers were disturbed by a hasty footstep on the stairs.

"My God!" exclaimed Violet, with shaken nerves and instinctive terror.

"Be calm, love," said D'Arcy, starting up as the door of their room flew open, and Woodville stood before him!

The servant attempted an explanation of this abrupt intrusion, but D'Arcy made him a sign to absent himself. There was a bright flame from the fire (although there was no lamp in the room), which was sufficient to render each person clearly distinguishable to the others. Woodville, for some seconds, remained standing in the middle of the apartment. He stared upon his child, who, on his entrance, had sunk upon the floor in an attitude between shame and terror. Her hands were clasped upon her knees, and her face was very pale; she ventured not to raise her half closed eyes to her parent's face, who, she felt, had fixed his gaze upon her.

Woodville suddenly burst into tears.

"My child!" he exclaimed, in a voice of the deepest emotion.

"I am here, father," said Violet, inarticulately, and cowering

lower; and lower; "I feared that you never would speak to me again."

Woodville advanced towards her, and, raising her from the ground, embraced her with burning tears.

"How you are altered," he suddenly exclaimed, and he looked upon her countenance, as if horror-struck. Violet was indeed altered: her face had grown very thin, her large eyes were sunken, her brilliant complexion had totally vanished, and in her dress and person there was an air of negligence.

Woodville, hitherto, had seemed solely occupied with Violet; but when he made this observation upon her changed appearance, it seemed to recall him to a recollection of D'Arcy's presence; for, quitting his child, he advanced to him fiercely, and striking his clenched hand on the table before him, he exclaimed in a voice of fury—

"And you have done it.—Villain! do you know, I could take your heart's blood for this bad work of yours. Unfeeling man! my child—my only one,—that beautiful innocent!—my poor little Violet."

Woodville's voice faltered at the mention of his daughter.

"Was there nothing but my child to content you?—to ruin her, to make us all miserable?"

Woodville paused,—he was totally overcome.

D'Arcy, since his entrance, had remained leaning against the fire-place; but, at this moment, if the flickering fire light had crossed his face, the moisture would have been seen gathering beneath, but not passing, his darkly fringed eyelids.

"I cannot contend with your sense of injury, Mr. Woodville," he observed, in a low voice, "and, were I to ask your forgiveness, you could not grant it me."

"Wretch!—you can now talk to me as coolly as when you cajoled my wife, and made her the witless pander to her child's seduction. Man! I tell you again, I would murder you,—could I by that means restore my lost girl's purity."

Violet rose up, and throwing herself before D'Arcy, with outstretched arms, she cried, "Father, if you would not have me die, do not say such words as those!"

"Unfortunate creature! do you not feel conscious for what a thing you are pleading?"

"He has been kind to me,—at least, he loves me," murmured Violet Woodville's angel voice.

"Violet," said D'Arcy, "leave us, my beloved : it is better that you should."

And so saying, he led her into an adjoining apartment, and returned instantly to her incensed and heart-broken father.

"Mr. Woodville," said D'Arcy, "I make the utmost allowance for your angry — your justly angry feelings ; but permit me to speak,—you shall interrupt me in an instant,—but will you consider that the evil which is done to you, though effected by me, would, and might have been done you by any other man, who was preferred by your daughter? This is no extenuation of my error, but there were temptations ; greater precautions should have been taken, — why were such facilities permitted to me, or to any one? and was it reasonable to expect that the feelings of your child should prove invulnerable, when so little check was put upon them?"

"Ay—ay, there you are right," said Woodville, bitterly : "God forgive me for my folly, and her mother too!"—He hesitated, and as if lost for a moment in a train of unhappy reflections, but he resumed ; "Say what you will, you basely took advantage of the hospitality of my house, such as my house was ; you have injured thereby a whole family,—your fellow creatures,—beyond reparation. Do you think an hour's happiness will ever beminde, or my wife's again? and if you *can* feel compunction, do you not experience it, when you look on the poor, faded, miserable being, to which you have reduced my once bright, beautiful child? Had you robbed me, and devoted me and mine, by some rascality, to penury for our lives, I might have pardoned you,—had you tried to take my life, still I might have forgiven you,—would you even have murdered my child—as a Christian, I think, on the day of your death warrant, I might have forgiven you ; but as her seducer," exclaimed Woodville, "no! I could not forgive you ; not even if I could behold you dying at my feet, and imploring mercy!"

D'Arcy appeared to preserve his self-possession during this stern address from the injured parent ; but at his last words he looked at him, and was struck with the wild and ferocious expression of Woodville's countenance : it was almost that of a ma-

niac, and the unnatural glare of his eyes contrasted strangely with the haggard paleness of his features, streaked with one bright spot of red — the hectic flush of a frame which had been so long agitated and overwrought. His figure, too, looked strange and attenuated; he had grown so much thinner, that his clothes hung upon, rather than fitted, his person. It might have been the dying fire-light which threw its unsteady glare upon his menacing attitude, and rendered the picture more sombre to D'Arcy's eyes. This idea seemed to occur to him, for he stirred up the embers, and lighted a lamp which stood on the table. Could a few weeks have wrought this change? he inwardly asked himself.

"Mr. Woodville," D'Arcy resumed, "I am submitting with all the patience I possess to your abuse, for I know I merit it fully, in your estimation. How much longer I may do so in my own house, is another thing; but some finale there must be to this discussion. Endeavour, if it be possible, to speak more calmly, or, if not, leave me now, and come again: or write and tell me what you in future desire, or expect from me."

"Give her to me again, — give me back my child! such as she is," cried Woodville, "and then I will pray that Heaven may rain its curses on you! But give her to me first, lest your misfortunes should in any way affect her!"

Woodville paused, as if unconscious what he was going to say; he sighed, and looked wildly round the room: his manner grew unnaturally calm, — he appeared half forgetful, and breathed hard, like one exhausted.

"It is useless and cruel to require your daughter to return to you now, Mr. Woodville; she herself, having once been under my protection, must desire to remain with me," said D'Arcy, mildly. "You must yourself feel that to ask her to quit me now, would be to condemn her to a life of wretchedness. The past cannot be repaired—why seek, therefore, to make your child unnecessarily wretched? You had better at present leave me. I give you my word as a gentleman, that when you next inquire for me, or for your daughter, you shall not be denied."

"I am ill," said Woodville, with a hoarse voice, "and my strength fails me—otherwise—but I will return again, and shortly too. As for you, Mr. d'Arcy, the worst wishes of a dying man

— if I am one—follow you!—may the vengeance of Heaven overtake you!”

Woodville, half absently, quitted D'Arcy's presence with these words.

D'Arcy instantly ordered a servant to follow him, and, if he desired it, to call a coach.

Apparently unconscious, the unhappy man got into one, and was driven home.

He found his wife, and M. Dupas sitting with her. At once, and differently from his usual reserve, he began vehemently speaking of the occurrences of the last few hours. But while he was talking he was interrupted by a choking sensation, and began to spit blood violently. Mrs. Woodville went into hysterics, while M. Dupas sent for the nearest surgeon.

In the meantime, if Violet Woodville was suffering keen remorse, she had an eloquent consoler. Her impulse was to write to her father, to implore his forgiveness in the most humble manner, and, if both her parents permitted her, to return to their protection. This intention D'Arcy combated with vigour, and he further gave orders to his servants, that no letters should be sent from Miss Woodville without first passing through his hands. One was accordingly brought to him addressed to Woodville. D'Arcy, without breaking the seal, put the letter into the fire; and, in so doing, his motives, perhaps, were not bad; for he argued,—what a life of weary penitence and regret would be consumed by Violet's returning home, and fulfilling the destiny she was proposing to herself!

He felt it rather to be his duty to rescue her from this miserable fate, and by every means in his power to endeavour to reconcile her to the sacrifices he had induced her to make. In the meanwhile he was surprised at seeing no more of Woodville; and when Violet, miserable at hearing nothing, obtaining no answer to the letter she imagined she had sent, lamented over it with despairing accents, D'Arcy consoled her as well as he could; but he himself could not divine the cause for the apparent abandonment of her family.

In the depth of his heart he could not help surmising, from the wretched state in which he beheld Woodville, that illness was the

true cause of his non-appearance. But that he should have sent none of his family, or M. Dupas, argued that he must be very, very ill indeed. D'Arcy shuddered. Hitherto he had not chosen to see his seduction of Violet in any light beyond the injury done to her. But could he deny having seen the extreme affection these poor Woodvilles had evinced for their child?—and in earlier days had not the delicate and touching tenderness of the father towards his daughter been displayed in a way that had gone home to his heart? That the Woodvilles had been imprudent in their conduct, and that Violet's mother was weak and worldly, was true; but even with her it arose from a foolish anxiety for her child's aggrandisement, and D'Arcy was forced to acquit her of harbouring for a moment the suspicion, much less the desire, that her daughter might be seduced even under the most splendid auspices. And Woodville, had he not shown repeatedly his determination to get quit of the visitors who came to his house, and whose presence might prove dangerous?

Woodville's faltering words, "My child!—my only one!—my little Violet!" rang long and sometimes horribly in D'Arcy's ears; and he could not turn within and say to himself, as he had to Woodville, "I have done that which another might have effected;" for he felt a profound conviction that none but himself would, or in all probability could, have ever effected the ruin of the pure-minded Violet Woodville.

D'Arcy was not a man to submit to more annoyance than necessity forced upon him. Finding Woodville did not appear again, after some further days had elapsed, he made speedy preparations for his own and his intended companion's departure for Italy.

They proceeded separately to Dover, and D'Arcy saw her embarked for Calais under the escort of one of his friends, and with a respectable foreign maid-servant.

Mrs. Hummings, by the bye, D'Arcy thought proper to dismiss, with a becoming gratuity for her past service.

The change of scene was of use to Violet Woodville, but she never felt happy. D'Arcy treated her with the utmost indulgence; in short, he proved all that a man can be to a woman with whom he is passionately in love. But Violet, assailed by constant remorse and by shame, soon became disenchanted. She began to



understand the nature of D'Arcy's love; and the illusion that his eloquence and her own purity had assisted to create—vanished.

D'Arcy was a sensualist, like most men, and when that conviction once forced itself upon her, she became doubly alive to the nature of her conduct. The truth was, that Violet found herself in a situation which could not fail to be revolting to her native disposition. However, D'Arcy did not, at first, discover this turn which her feelings had taken.

It must not, in the meantime, be supposed that the severity of her compunction and her grief were not apparently lessened. Violet possessed too much tact to display a sorrow which must act as a reproach to D'Arcy.

For his sake, therefore, she entered into his plans for her amusement. She was touched by his solicitude, and the peculiar tenderness of her nature rendered her alive to all the charm of being loved.

No intelligence was received respecting her family.

D'Arcy secretly continued to wonder that neither her mother nor M. Dupas should write, if Woodville could not, or would not.

Violet always imagined that they were too deeply incensed to intend ever taking further notice of her. When she was alone, if any thing, by chance, recalled England, or her home, the tears would roll down her cheeks in heavy drops, and sighs would burst from her bosom. "Oh, my poor father—if he would but forgive me!" she would inwardly exclaim; and her heart would yearn to behold again the fond parent she best loved.

Still she trusted to their both being well, and looked forward to returning to England, and then hearing of, if not seeing them.

This return was delayed much longer than D'Arcy desired, or than she expected; and Violet Woodville was able to number by years her absence from her own country.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

“ We take no note of time,  
But from its loss— to give it then a tongue  
Is wise in man.”

MY readers must suppose a few years to have elapsed since the events we last recorded; and allow me to open a new scene, by introducing them to a ball at Almack's, at a time when Almack's was thought much more of than it is in these days;—only then, as now, were to be seen the same description of persons collected for the purposes of business or amusement.

There were the chaperoning mammas, with anxious hearts and watchful eyes; and the *ennuyé* seeking to forget himself. There, too, was the weak woman hovering on the verge of crime; there the bolder sinner, hardened in the commission of evil,—the insignificant dandy—and the boys who aped him.

One of the lady patronesses was looking attentively through her glass at some object which the movement of the dancers occasionally hid from her view. Lady Colemore at length beckoned her son, a handsome youth of seventeen, and asked him if he knew the lady whom she described, as being one whose dress and appearance were remarkable.

“ Ask some one, my dear Augustus, if you are ignorant.”

Augustus promised, but he did not keep his word; and Lady Colemore looked round for a better informant.

The lady who attracted her attention was advancing up the room, leaning upon the arm of a political character of some celebrity, and who appeared much engrossed with his charge.

She was strikingly handsome, and equally well dressed. She appeared young, and no fault could be found with her *tournure*, which might be called distinguished; though at times she looked as if she had entered upon a new scene: but the shyness consequent upon a *débüt* was more strongly manifested in her countenance than in her demeanour.

"Can you tell me who that is?" said Lady Colemore, turning to a gentleman who stood near her: he was a man about thirty—that is to say, he had one of those slight and well-proportioned figures which do not tally with their possessors' being beyond thirty, whether they are or not. In this instance the pale complexion, the steady eye, and the cold but forcible expression, were symptoms that the fire of youth had subsided; but, in recompense, there was the mark of talent imprinted on a countenance so handsome as to interest any beholder who viewed it closely.

"Who is that?" said Lady Colemore, addressing this individual.

"Harcourt's wife."

"Dear me!—what, that person?"

"Yes. Harcourt has been abroad these three years. They are come from Paris."

"Did you know them abroad?"

"No: Harcourt is an old acquaintance of mine; but we only met again since our mutual return to England."

"Then, what *is* she?—do you know?"

"I was staying with them at Easter. She has good manners. Her conduct, I believe, so far, is irreproachable."

"Oh! what was she?"

"An Opera-dancer. Harcourt married her three or four years ago."

"Ah, yes!—I recollect—an uncommonly foolish thing. It was very, very much talked of at the time. I don't remember seeing her before."

"They have been abroad ever since they married. At Paris she was much admired."

"Do *you* like her?"

"She is agreeable and very piquante; and I believe she has shown some merit, considering what she was."

Lady Colemore's inquiries were terminated by the answerer taking an opportunity of disappearing from her vicinity, and in quest of Mrs. Harcourt, too—for he was soon to be seen talking with her.

"I never know whether I like Mr. d'Arcy or not," said Lady Colemore to a middle-aged, caustic-looking man, who stood near her. "His manners are cold; and there is sometimes a superciliousness about him, which he may not mean, but which is highly disagreeable."

"It is not easy to be very certain as to what Mr. d'Arcy means; his manner is often unpleasing. I have heard him say the severest things to those against whom, in their absence, I never heard him proffer an opinion. He is a scorner of trivial abuse, and so much the better. George d'Arcy has friends as well as enemies; and I have prognosticated that he will, some day, discover how much he is a man of talent. He is elected for C——, and will have an opportunity of showing himself in the House of Commons."

Harcourt and Emily had now been married long enough to be thoroughly acquainted. They had passed most of their time on the Continent, particularly at Paris. Before this period Harcourt had made no attempt to introduce his wife in London. Now, however, he was willing and anxious this should be done; but not at the expense of any trouble to himself; for that, in any shape, was always the thing that Harcourt continued to hate most.

Mrs. Harcourt soon learnt to understand her husband's character. She discovered that he possessed more vanity than affection. He was spoilt and capricious; and capricious to her; for he sometimes regretted the sacrifice he had made by so unequal an alliance.

Emily felt a little in awe of him when they were much alone, and she was not very sorry when the distractions of society caused them to be more separated, and relieved her from attending to every turn of a selfish husband's summons.

By the aid of a few of his friends, she began to make her way in what is called the exclusive society of London. Her beauty, her

dress, and her natural quickness, did much for her in a circle always gasping for novelty. The dandies protected her, one and all; and, with them, Emily, it must be acknowledged, felt more at her ease than with ladies, whose reception of her she occasionally disliked, and always feared.

The Harcourts and D'Arcy returned from the Continent about the same time. They had not met for ages, and D'Arcy, being idle, accepted the invitation of his old companion to pay him a visit at Easter. A few days spent in a country house make us soon acquainted with its inmates.

D'Arcy and Mrs. Harcourt thought each other mutually improved; and when both met again in town, he became a frequent guest at her house.

D'Arcy was desirous of quitting diplomacy, and of coming into Parliament, if he could find a prospect of doing so, which was at this time held out by a connexion of his own—Lord G——.

Lord G—— had no direct heir to his property, and, during his life, he was fond of dispensing it indiscriminately to those he liked. He remembered having known D'Arcy when he was only an Eton boy: he remembered having thought him clever then; and though he had afterwards lost sight of him, now that they met again, he thought sufficiently well of him to offer him a seat in the House as the representative of the borough of C——.

D'Arcy declared frankly that he would gladly accede to this proposition; but he doubted whether he could afford to renounce his appointment, in order to attend to what are pleasingly termed “parliamentary duties.”

Lord G——, in the handsomest manner, offered to make a settlement upon D'Arcy for life.

D'Arcy was not very much surprised at this generous proposal; for he knew his kinsman G——'s character. He refused it, however, with great decision,—adding, notwithstanding, that he found the borough of C—— too great a temptation, and that he would accept it, and take his chance for futurity.

“Mr. d'Arcy,” said Mrs. Harcourt, slightly colouring, “I know I have not said as much to you as other people have done, but do not suppose that I admire your talents less. I have only felt shy of offering my humble congratulations on your success.”

These words were one day spoken by Mrs. Harcourt during a morning visit which D'Arcy made her. They alluded to his recent fame in the House of Commons; for D'Arcy, on taking his seat, lost no time in displaying the vein of eloquence which he possessed in an eminent degree. He was suddenly cried up, and many were the prognostications of his future career. To great quickness, D'Arcy joined a hardihood of manner and a boldness of sentiment which, in many cases, are allied to genius, and which always give promise of it. His speeches became the general topic of conversation. In short, there was that sort of moonshine celebrity instantly attaching itself to him, which is always in store for every *débutant* who distinguishes himself by striking out something new.

D'Arcy smiled, and appeared pleased with Mrs. Harcourt's acknowledgment of his fame. She spoke, too, with something like embarrassment, and with a hesitation D'Arcy could not account for; although she had just made professions of shyness, he had not felt at all inclined to believe them.

"At last," continued Emily, "at last you will be appreciated."

"At last! at last, Mrs. Harcourt. The world just now is kind enough to flatter me, perhaps without foundation; but you say at last, as if you thought this should have occurred sooner."

"And so it might."

"Have you, then, been one of those who were kind enough to suppose me something better than I may have seemed?"

"At least in one sense I have, certainly, for I have never forgotten an act of kindness I received from you long ago, when I knew you slightly, and when I did not like you, probably because I thought you disliked me: it was feeling as I did towards you that made me the more grateful that day that——" Emily paused.

"I remember what you refer to, but you overrate a kindness which would have been equally shown by any gentleman. Do you know I was curious to learn to whom that letter was addressed?"

"Surely you read the address?" exclaimed Mrs. Harcourt.

"No; for if you recollect, the letter was stolen from me before I could have seen the superscription."

"Upon what little circumstances the most important events of our lives may turn!" said Emily, musingly.

"I imagined the letter was for Harcourt," observed D'Arcy.

"That was not the case."

"Indeed!" answered D'Arcy with surprise; "for some one whom you liked better?"

"I must confess that it was. I was attached to a person who would have been a suitable match, if the ambitious views of my mother, and my own, too, for I will be just, had not made me determine, if I could, to marry Mr. Harcourt. I received at that time a letter from Mr. Larray, offering me his hand. In a moment of pique against Harcourt, and of returning feeling towards Henry Larray, I wrote to accept him. I knew that with my mother's consent I could never send this letter—she had already endeavoured to prevent my receiving his proposal. It was you who so unexpectedly came to my assistance. Afterwards I made up the quarrel with Mr. Harcourt, and once more I listened to my mother's arguments; and I fear, when I heard from you of the singular fate that had befallen my epistle, I was not as sorry as I ought to have been."

"But your kindness on that occasion I have never forgotten," continued Mrs. Harcourt, with animation.

"I am much flattered by this recollection: I feel consoled also for having lost the letter, since I might not otherwise have had the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Harcourt so frequently."

"Ah, say nothing very civil to me, pray, Mr. d'Arcy," replied Emily very archly: "I shall think you dislike me if you begin to compliment."

"Why so?"

"You used to make me speeches formerly, when, though you were so kind to me on this occasion, I know you did not like me."

"And you have not forgotten that, all this time?"

"You see I have not."

D'Arcy, when he took his leave that day, inquired of Mrs. Harcourt if she was always at home at the same hour!

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CHAPTER XVIII.

"I hate inconstancy. I loathe, detest,  
Abhor, condemn, abjure the mortal made  
Of such quicksilver clay that in his breast  
No permanent foundation can be laid;  
Love, constant love, has been my constant guest,  
And yet last night, being at a masquerade,  
I saw the prettiest creature, fresh from Milan,  
Which gave me some sensations, like a villain."

BYRON.

"Must I have always tears to kiss away?"

FAZIO.

"OH, George, I thought you never would come home!" exclaimed a gentle and familiar voice to D'Arcy as he entered his sitting-room.

It was the voice of the beautiful Violet Woodville, and the mistress of D'Arcy!

She was changed from the period of her first introduction to the reader. Her complexion was much paler, and her beauty had altered its character, but beautiful indeed she still remained.

She had been sitting up, late as it was, waiting the return of D'Arcy. Books were on the table, the pianoforte was open, and a guitar was lying on a chair, but yet Violet had a listless look, without any appearance of having employed herself.



"Is it late!" said D'Arcy, carelessly. "Why did you sit up? You are very pale; you would have done better to have been asleep."

"I cannot sleep," answered Violet, in a tone of despair.

"What *is* the matter, my dear Violet? Have you heard anything of your parents, at last?"

"No, D'Arcy, worse than that, for I can hear nothing of them, and I give it up. Oh God!"

"Nonsense, dearest; you get nervous, and you exaggerate everything. Whom did you send?"

"Howell went, and he found our old house, but the people who were in it had lived there a twelvemonth, and they had taken it of a family called Jones. They had heard of no one of the name of Woodville having anything to do with the house. Then I directed Howell to go to my father's landlord, in the city, who was a merchant; but he is dead, and his nephew, who is his heir, knew nothing of the tenants, or hardly of the house; however, he directed his clerks to look over his books, and from them it could only be ascertained that before his uncle's death my father must have left the house, for these Joneses were the inhabitants at that time, and there was a note of the receipt of the year's rent up to last October two years."

"It is most strange," said D'Arcy, thinking aloud, "that neither Dupas, nor your mother, should have taken any means to communicate with you."

"Why not my father, as soon as either of them?" demanded Violet, hastily. "My father would have been the first, not the last one, to forgive me."

"I don't know what to advise you," answered D'Arcy, evasively; "but I must say, that if the conduct of your relations is so very unnatural, you need care very little about them."

"You forget that I have deserved it all. How did I repay their goodness, especially my father's! Can I ever forget his affection?—D'Arcy, you never appreciated my father; you did not know him enough, and you cannot understand my misery. 'Oh Father, which art in heaven!' cried Violet, with sudden grief, and sinking on her knees, with upraised hands and eyes,—'Grant me but to see him once more, were it but to hear him curse me. My

God,—my God, hear my prayer, and punish me as I deserve ; let me die in wretchedness, but *this* desire—let it be granted unto me ! ’ ’

“ This is shocking ! ” exclaimed D’Arcy, pacing up and down the room.

He must have been moved by the scene before him, and his heart must have been sensible of pity, and perhaps of remorse ; but these sentiments were mingled with displeasure at their being called forth, and his love was lessened at that moment in the same ratio that he felt his moral comfort disturbed.

“ This is a great bore, and very unpleasant for me, ” composed the sort of idea that pervaded D’Arcy’s mind, without defining it to himself in words.

“ Violet, ” said he, after a slight pause, “ you must not vex yourself in this way. You exert your energies too violently, and you exhaust your strength ; to-morrow you will be ill. As it is, your health is anything but what it used to be. The circumstances that ought the most to reconcile you to be in ignorance of the abode of your relations, seem to have exactly the contrary effect. Calm yourself, my dear Violet, and pray remember that these scenes distress me, and that really I cannot help.—In fact, it is their fault entirely. I think them highly to blame. Surely, however, there must be some of your father’s friends, whose name you know, and who can inform us of him ? ”

“ You know the inquiries I have already made, and that I can learn nothing more than that they went abroad two years since ; and that my father was ill. If he got better he talked of going to America. The Octavians and Mr. Brown are gone to America—the people with whom my mother was most intimate. It appears strange, that in three years I should have lost all clue to such near relations ; but it seems as if everything about them was forgotten. Can you, then, wonder that I am profoundly miserable ? ”

“ Those are strong words—I might have hoped to have been cared for, and deemed by you as something—am I to be considered as nothing ? ”

“ Ah, D’Arcy, ” answered Violet, in a tone of reproach ; “ why do you say this to me ?—Those words should not come from you

—so futile too, at such a moment. *You* not cared for!—*You* considered as nothing! Nothing! My God!” she a second time ejaculated, as if again in prayer.

“Your parents, in abandoning you, love, behaved very ill,” continued D’Arcy. “I can only say, put it to any one and he will agree with me, that they have no claim to the grief you show about them, to the total destruction of your peace and of mine, if this is to go on. Now, dearest, let us talk of something else. You never told me how you liked the new opera?”

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D’Arcy’s fame did not rest upon a momentary celebrity. He followed it up with other triumphs, and he was soon looked upon as a rising star amongst the competitors for the honours which ambition holds out.

D’Arcy was not surprised at his own success, because he always felt the secret consciousness of talent; he did not feel very much elated by it either. Lady Colemore would have said that his frigidity caused him to take so sober a view of his success; whereas it was a natural consequence of having lost all the freshness which gilds the feelings of our youth—beautiful even in their fleeting brilliancy.

D’Arcy nevertheless was ambitious. A political career seemed the one most suited to him now; and it offered the chance of some illusions as yet unproved by him, of disgust and disappointments of a nature as yet unfelt. It was to be the means of turning over another leaf in the book of life, and of learning some of those extraordinary contradictions in mankind, which offer such fields of speculation to those who like to philosophize on human nature.

D’Arcy therefore employed his hours busily; and in his lounging moments he resorted to the house of his friend Harcourt.

He felt interested in noting the progress of Emily Norris, who was gradually fixing herself in the world as a beauty of high renown, and a woman of fashion into the bargain.

Harcourt, although he was well pleased that this should be the case, was not the less *ennuyé* at home, or less inclined to be out

of humour whenever he felt in the mood. Emily managed him with a tact that amused D'Arcy.

He began too to have an opinion of her *sagesse*, for, with a great many admirers, not one was distinguished by her.

Once or twice it occurred to D'Arcy how curious she must be to learn of him something of her former friend, Violet Woodville—but only once or twice did this idea arise; for it was in the society of Mrs. Harcourt that D'Arcy approached the nearest towards forgetting the existence of Violet Woodville.

If she had not lately made him uncomfortable with himself; if her tearful eyes, her pale countenance, and her unjoyous manner, had not been so many means of inflicting reproach upon him; Violet would not have lost any of D'Arcy's love.

Few men stand the trial of being bored. Ill-treatment of any description, manual and moral, they will bear with infinite patience and infinite love; but to be bored, to be roasted by means of one person in the slow fire of self-reproach,—no man's love will stand that, or woman's either, I fear.

The man or woman who subjects the other to this ordeal, depends solely on the goodness of heart of the person on whom the trial is made; and Violet was beginning to render herself dependant upon the goodness of D'Arcy's heart.

"Is that a new guest of yours?" asked D'Arcy, one day that he was paying Mrs. Harcourt a morning visit. His question had reference to a smart and indolent-looking lady who just quitted the room.

"Yes; I met her at dinner the other day. She was very civil in wishing to make my acquaintance, and has since called upon me."

"Do you mean to cultivate her?"

"I have not thought about it, but it would be unwise in me, who am such a decided *parvenue*, to decline her overtures."

"But you may shun a person more or less."

"Oh certainly. But what is your objection to Mrs. Fitzmorris!"

"I think her a dangerous woman."

"*Tracassière*?"

"Yes; and also always ready to do anything, however extraordinary, if it suit her purpose."

At this moment Harcourt entered the room, and flung himself upon a sofa.

"What a confounded hot day it is! Where is one to get good ice? Tuccio is so out of the way. Good morning, D'Arcy! Whom have you had here, Emily?"

"Mrs. Fitzmorris has just left me."

"Ah! what, D'Arcy's old flame?—and you were here, D'Arcy? What do you think she is grown into?"

"A lady is never the better for wear; but, upon my word, I still think her a pretty woman."

"Oh! Emily would be jealous if I made love to her," continued Harcourt, who was in a very affable humour that morning.

"And I all this time did not know she was a flame of Mr. d'Arcy's!" exclaimed Mrs. Harcourt, in a tone of surprise.

"How do you get on with Mrs. Fitzmorris, D'Arcy?"

"We are excellent friends, I believe. Did it not strike you so, Mrs. Harcourt?"

"I cannot say that; but I see you know her well, and any advice I get from you on that head I shall attend to."

D'Arcy had a house in one of the terraces facing the Regent's Park: he had taken care to have it prettily furnished; and the sunny aspect and enlivening green expanse, on which the eye could dwell from the windows, rendered it a cheerful abode, and one in which Violet would have lived most contentedly if—but there are always ifs.

D'Arcy had really taken pains to secure every comfort for her. She had a carriage at her command, and his servants were taught to respect her as their undisputed mistress. He endeavoured to make her preside at his table, and wished at once to introduce her to all his male friends—but this she refused. Abroad, she obliged him willingly in this particular, but in England, where she had once been so well known, Violet shrank from such an exposure—for such she deemed it.

"You must have a box at the Opera for the alternate weeks at least, Violet," said D'Arcy to her one day; "and the French play is good this year. Pray take a box whenever you like, dearest. I only wish I could induce you to enter into more society."

Pleased with his efforts to render her happier, a smile something

like contentment beamed in Violet Woodville's eyes, and she exclaimed—

“ While I can think you love me as much as you used to do, I cannot be quite miserable!”

“ Well, then, you might be always happy if it depended on your security of my love, my own little Violet!—is it not so?”

At this moment the servant entered with two three-cornered notes addressed to D'Arcy. D'Arcy gave one to Violet, telling her to read the contents, while he perused the other.

Violet read as follows:—

“ Pray dine with us to-day. I have a great mind, if you say “yes,” to invite a dangerous friend of yours : she would be delighted.

“ Yours,

“ E. HARCOURT.”

“ Emily,—Emily Norris!” said Violet, letting the note drop from her hands,—“ I did not know you were so intimate with her that,—and *she* is able to ask you thus to her house! Oh! what a difference there is between us!—tell me, D'Arcy,” she asked with sudden impetuosity, “ do you think, after all, that woman is better than I am?”

“ No,—neither so good, nor so handsome; but you know, I stayed with the Harcourts in the country, and of course I must be pretty well acquainted with her.”

“ That's true, but I have not heard you speak of her.”

“ I did not know you wanted particularly to hear about her, and I have not encouragement to tell you any thing connected with the pomps and vanities, etc. etc.; you are always out of spirits now when I come home.”

Violet gave a gentle involuntary sigh, but still she continued : “ Then do you see Emily very often now?”

“ No,—yes, I go there when it suits me,—when I have time,” answered D'Arcy, rather impatiently.

Violet felt rebuffed, and thinking, hoping that she was to blame, and not D'Arcy, for this impatience, she playfully turned the subject by asking who the other note was from, which he held in his hand, written on pink paper, and sealed with green wax.

"Yes," said D'Arcy, "exactly like a ——;" he stopped short.

"Like a what?" asked Violet, innocently.

"Nothing, my love,—like a fool as she is;" and he threw the coloured note on the table.

"May I read it?" Violet demanded.

"I must see you. I have something very particular to say to you. I will be at home for you till four o'clock; you will come, bad as you are, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"Shall you go? and who is the lady, for I cannot decipher the illegible initials?"

"Mrs. Fitzmorris, As for going,—yes, if it will amuse you to hear what I am wanted for."

"Oh, pray go," answered Violet with sweetness: for she had not lately seen D'Arcy so good-humoured as on this day.

Having, therefore, nothing more urgent to call him elsewhere, towards four o'clock D'Arcy went to pay the desired visit to Mrs. Fitzmorris.

I have described this lady before. She was the identical, languishing, pale, blue-eyed Matilda, to whom D'Arcy had been obliged to give her *congé*, in a morning call, some years previous to the present era. Time had altered her a little, and Matilda was grown to look older, which is not a thing of course, because there are actually many with whom time is the means of effacing himself. Who has not occasionally seen a lady at forty, comparatively young, and good-looking, who at thirty contrived to seem aged and dowdy? Mrs. Fitzmorris, however, was grown to look a *little* older; she had adopted a stronger shade of rouge, and was more elaborately dressed, and with more affectation; in short, she looked more decidedly like a very foolish woman than formerly. We seldom with our years correct our foibles, whatever may be the case with great failings; and thus the imbecility arising from a trumpety vanity increases, if possible, when a woman has once been its wholesale victim.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mrs. Fitzmorris, when D'Arcy entered her drawing-room, "it is kind of you to come; but why have not you been to see me before?"

"I have tried, and you were always out."

"Oh, of course, when you call at six o'clock."

"But I am so often engaged."

"Yes, yes, you are becoming an orator; well, I am glad of your success."

D'Arcy bowed; made some pretty speech in return, and then said, "Tell me, did you really want to see me about something in particular this morning!"

"You vain creature!—Did you think I made the excuse for the sake of *vos beaux yeux*?" And so saying, Mrs. Fitzmorris had very much the air of such being the case.

"By no means; you know I never was vain, and besides——"

"Besides, you are otherwise occupied, I am well aware." Mrs. Fitzmorris played with her rings, and looked down.

"Indeed! who has told you so?"

"As if I could remember, or should tell you if I did. Well, but isn't it true that you have quite forgotten old times?" asked Mrs. Fitzmorris, with a most coquettish expression.

"Rest assured, as much as you can possibly desire that I should do," answered D'Arcy, promptly.

"I did not say, I *desired* it;—that's your version, not mine."

"Then," said D'Arcy, "you see I have forestalled your wishes."

The way in which this was said, betrayed at once that D'Arcy had no intention to renew the old affair with his companion, and betrayed a coldness, if not dislike, easily seen through, and severely felt by Mrs. Fitzmorris. She bit her lip, and coloured with anger.

"You need not say things so pointedly. I have eyes as well as others; and was not going to make love to you, as you seem to be so much afraid that I should. In common with all the world, I am quite aware that the ground is taken. How do you find Mrs. Harcourt?"

"Is that the lady the world is so obliging as to couple my name with?"

"The poor world is not to blame;—it can hardly help itself, I think."

"It both can and shall," said D'Arcy, indignantly.

"Oh, don't be angry. Silencing the world must of course depend upon yourself. You have only to give her up. If you care for her reputation, there is no time to lose."



"So as to leave it to choice, whether it shall be said that I am defeated or only tired of the lady."

"Once, when I was considered the object, they said the latter, I remember. The chances are equal—no, that would be too good-natured. The world will say that you are tired of her: she is the woman, and the weakest; and when was a favourable construction ever put where a bad one could be given? Still, as the notoriety is only in the bud, it will be talked of for two days, and then forgotten. Shall I begin by denying it, and stand up as the champion of Mrs. Harcourt? Come to my Opera-box to-night, instead of hers, and I will."

"That would be too sudden a retreat."

"Oh, I see!" answered Mrs. Fitzmorris, impatiently. "Do you think her handsome?"

"Exceedingly!"

"Undeniably vulgar?"

"In saying so, you discover your usual originality of opinion. I entirely differ from you. But why do you hate her?"

"I hate her?—Not I!"

"You forget," said D'Arcy, "how well we know each other; and that I am aware you always see people black or white, according to your prejudices."

Some credit was due to Mrs. Fitzmorris for the apparent good humour with which she bore the uncivil observations of her quondam lover. She was, in fact, naturally good-tempered, but also very spiteful—a union of qualities not unfrequently witnessed.

"What has become of that beautiful girl you seduced and ran away with?" she asked; and, observing D'Arcy hesitated, she added—"Oh! it was no secret, and affects no one's reputation, except the poor girl's, which you destroyed so long ago. So, as we do know each other so well, I thought I might ask that question. I know she lived with you abroad. Does she still?"

"She does."

"Poor thing?—Do you care for her?"

"I really do,—why do you inquire?"

"And is she constant, well-behaved, or does she make you jealous?"

"She never has, hitherto."

"She is beautiful, is not she? I am sure you like her," pursued Mrs. Fitzmorris, and looking curiously in D'Arcy's face, as if to read there a true solution to her inquiry.

"She is beautiful, handsomer, far handsomer than any other woman I ever met with in my life," D'Arcy replied, rising to take his leave.

He felt it a secret reproach, that such a woman should be able to speak profanely of Violet Woodville. He was glad to declare her beauty, and to convey, in that respect, his opinion of Mrs. Fitzmorris's inferiority,—but he was more glad to escape from speaking at all with reference to a subject that galled him; and D'Arcy quitted the presence of Mrs. Fitzmorris more than ever disposed to avoid her in future.

It is the most useless thing to define the character of a person, because, if you were to do so with the utmost exactitude, it is almost a certainty that if their entire history should be written, in some one circumstance the practice of the individual would be found at variance with his or her moral attributes.

For instance, Mrs. Fitzmorris was about as heartless, as frivolous, as worthless as any woman could well be; yet, such as she was, she had felt herself capable of sacrifices, and had shed tears of extreme sorrow at the time when she saw that she was neglected by a man she preferred. She did not love well, I mean heroically, but still her love was an improvement, compared to anything else she was capable of either doing or feeling.

D'Arcy, too, after a fashion, had seemed to like her once. She was then young and pretty, and very lively; she afforded him amusement, added to which, he saw he was the first possessor of all the heart she had to give. The advances were rather on her side at the beginning, but she succeeded in captivating D'Arcy for a time. After a while he was inclined to grow tired of this *liaison*, and, from the excessive imprudence of Mrs. Fitzmorris was alarmed lest even her patient husband should be exposed to the absolute necessity of discovering that secret known to all the world, which M. Balzac so pithily declares since the memory of man it has never betrayed.

In the pursuit of Violet Woodville, D'Arcy often forgot Mrs. Fitzmorris altogether; then, when she upbraided him for his care-

lessness, she had to bear with coldness and fault-finding,—condemned to discover the most painful of all truths, that your lover has not only ceased to love you, but that he leaves you in doubt if he ever loved you at all.

Mrs. Fitzmorris bore numerous mortifications proving this to be her case, with more calmness than many woman would have done. The reasons were, that she was, as has been said, possessed of an inherent good temper; and, secondly, she was devoid of the delicacy of sentiment which would have made any other person deeply sensible to half her provocations.

She did not go to one ball the fewer, or spend one half hour the less before her looking-glass, nor, even in thought, did she deny herself the consolation of looking forward to repairing his loss.

She soon heard of D'Arcy having fallen in love with Violet Woodville, and of her being his mistress; but this fact did not distress her, as a ten minutes' flirtation would have done, if he had been seen to have one with a lady in her own set. Finally, when, after the absence of years, D'Arcy returned to his country, and began, in worldly parlance, to throw himself at the feet of Mrs. Harcourt, he gave Mrs. Fitzmorris the utmost annoyance it was in his power to inflict.

Mrs. Harcourt was a young beauty, invested with the charm of novelty, and, consequently, with a whole cloud of admirers hovering about her. It was quite natural that Mrs. Fitzmorris should envy her beyond measure, and that she should try to do all she could to take D'Arcy from her.

She did try to effect this; and, as D'Arcy said, she was always ready to do anything, however extraordinary, to suit her purpose. She had what the French designate as "*une mauvaise tête*."

In obedience to D'Arcy's wishes, Violet went frequently to the Opera: with what mixed sentiments she went there at first, it is impossible to say, still it was the only amusement that gave her pleasure. New operas and new ballets had started into existence since she had last visited the King's Theatre; and Violet was exceedingly fond of music.

D'Arcy very often stayed part of the time in her box. If he told her he was not likely to come at all, she seldom went. As a sort

of chaperone, Violet took with her a Neapolitan maid, Marietta, an ugly, stout, good-humoured Italian girl of five-and-twenty. She drew the curtain of her box as closely as possible, and endeavoured to escape the observation of every one.

One night, when she was more than usually absorbed in the acting of Malibran, she discovered that she was an object of notice to a lady who sat in the third box from her, and almost fronting her. Violet could not avoid perceiving that she was watched by this person, and she wondered who it could be. She was, apparently, a full-blown personage, with more rouge and more boldness than any lady (off the stage) she had ever seen before. Her whole appearance, in short, denoted her character to be equivocal.

After being stared at some time, Violet was dismayed by the lady's suddenly emitting sparkling gleams of recognition, combined with all the gesticulation with which foreigners can distort their features. It may be supposed poor Violet made no signs of reply, and was lost in wondering dread of who the stranger could be; when, all at once, it flashed upon her that it was a face she had formerly known. Violet longed for D'Arcy to enlighten her, if possible; but he had already been to her box that night, and did not come again.

On the next morning, about one o'clock, as she was pensively inhaling the fragrance of the mignonette, at her pretty drawing-room window, the servant unexpectedly announced a visiter; and, almost before she was aware of her presence, Violet found herself embraced by the stranger who had recognized her the night before.

It was not for a few succeeding minutes that she was able to recollect the features of Madlle. Céleste. Our readers have, perhaps, likewise forgotten her. But Violet Woodville's want of memory was excusable. From a coquettish French girl, pert-looking, but very pretty, Céleste had spread out into a fat, coarse woman. She was rouged immoderately; her once clear brown skin was painted white and her eyebrows appeared to have been rubbed with a blackened cork. Her dress was of the most outré fashion; and short petticoats being then worn, the shortness of those of Madlle. Céleste was positively alarming. Altogether, her person displayed the appearance of a lengthened apprenticeship in vice, and that, too, not of the best order.

Violet was struck with dismay at being familiarly accosted by such a personage.

The coldness of her reception Mlle. Céleste either did not, or would not see. She drew a chair, and left Violet to recover her surprise, while she talked for both; and while she did so, her eyes seemed to be walking round the room, for the purpose of taking the minutest cognizance of every thing in it that they could.

“ *Est-ce que le rez-de-chaussée est à vous aussi, mademoiselle ?* ”

Violet bowed an affirmative, on which Céleste made large eyes, and exclaimed,—“ *Oh ! la maison est toute à vous donc ? Ah, vous êtes bien, ça se voit ; mais c’est toujours M. d’Arcy qui vous met dans vos meubles, n’est-ce pas ?* ”

Violet Woodville never felt a stronger feeling of disgust than that she now entertained towards this woman, and her distant manner would have been tantamount to a dismissal, if the brass of Mlle. Céleste had not been proof against every thing. She went on talking unconcernedly, she made answers for herself, absolutely astounding Violet by her behaviour. At the same time it was now and then impossible not to smile at the strange light in which she exhibited herself, and, while she went on talking, it more than once occurred to her unfortunate auditor to question whether Mademoiselle was most knave or fool.

Céleste recounted her own history since they had been last in presence of each other. She said she had been very ill used, and had suffered severely from *la jalousie brutale* of Lord W. “ *Est-il jaloux, lui ?* ” said the fair one, interrupting herself, and illustrating her meaning with a jerk of her head and a turn with one eye.

“ Who do you mean, Mdlle. Céleste ? ”

“ *Mais ! M. d’Arcy ? Il n’est pas jaloux, Madame. Vraiment ! Il a l’air tout au contraire. C’est ce que je dis, la physionomie dit toujours faux. Mais que disais-je tout à l’heure ?* But what is it I talk French for, dat speaks English ? Would you credit *comme j’ai été maltraitée ?* Lord Villiom s’avisa to be *jaloux* of a cousin of my own, *un jeune homme charmant*, and perfect the gentleman in his *principes* ; and one day he was visiting at me, Lord Villiom put him from my house

by de vhole flight of steps, from top to bottom. I had fits, *des évanouissements effroyables*. *Ah ! le souvenir de mes malheurs m'est bien pénible,*—and Céleste, at this period of her narration, sunk her voice down to a soprano.

Violet maintained silence, and again hoped she would go ; but she hoped in vain. Violet Woodville, in the mean time, sat before her, her cheeks dyed with a blush of mingled shame and anger, caused by the cruel necessity of enduring the presence of such a character. She persevered in making short replies to her communications, but this only encouraged Mdlle. Céleste to talk the more, and to lengthen the details of her own history. Perhaps she imagined she was amusing her victim.

“ I was carried to a hospital, tinkering to die ; I had not money nor friends ; dat young brute, my Lord Villiom, behaved so scandalous unto me,—*Oh, cet homme doit être brûlé vif. Bah !*”

“ But your cousin, Madame, should have taken care of you,” Violet condescended to interpose ; for she felt rather interested, in spite of herself, at this climax of Céleste’s misfortunes.

“ *Ah ! lui ! mais il était obligé de retourner en Bretagne, rejoindre ses parents ; c’est un jeune homme qui a des amis très illustres.* But I tell all, in short. After dat I got vell. But my confessor talk very much to me ven I was ill. He persuade me to lead unquiet life, *très retirée*. He very kind old man to me, and did make me tink all sorts of disagreeable tings. And he was means of getting me a place vith a noble family in the provinces, as English governess,—you see I speak de English quite fluently ; and it was not people dat knew *Paris ; ancienne noblesse très rococo, extrêmement rococo. Cependant mon malheureux destin, hélas ! m’a poursuivie.*

“ I was not à l’abri to the unfortunate passion that the brother of my pupils conceived for me. I said all I could to induce him not to molest me. *Enfin, au moment de se noyer, il m’a arraché des pleurs. Sa mère barbare nous a découverts, c’est à dire mes pleurs. Et elle s’est indignement conduite avec moi.* I did leave their house. I did arrive in England,—*j’étais sans ressources*,—de Opera was over, de town empty, de men all gone,—*aussi j’avais des principes, j’avais toujours peur du diable depuis ma maladie affreuse.* I did get into a Scotch

family to teach de French. I was to join them in Scotland : c'était encore des gens de province. *Eh bien, concevez mon horreur!* I go to dese people, and find myself *reléguée* in an old tower in de nord of Scotland. Rain continuel, never cease,—on vat dey call fine days was only small rain, vat dey call mist. Then notting to eat, *des légumes crus et soupe maigre*,—no fire,—*c'était défendu par leur religion, je crois, jusqu'au mois de Novembre au moins.* On Sundays they go to church, and hear oneman speak in de Gaelic, langage *des Druïdes*,—*des gens qui existaient avant le temps de Louis Quatorze.* This last three hours, and then was translated for de famille.

"My pupils had all red heads, and spoke with voices tearing away my ears;—with hands and feet and *une tournure si affreuse, que je n'ose vous en faire la description.* *Puis pas un seul homme! Enfin je me suis sauvée après trois mois de prison parmi ce peuple sauvage; c'était avoir goûté du purgatoire d'avance, aussi à cause de cela j'ai obtenu absolution de tous mes péchés pendant six mois. Désormais, jamais—je ne songerai jamais à me placer; et voilà deux ans déjà que je me trouve très-bien.* Pas comme vous, *machère, cependant,*" said Céleste, once more casting her eyes round the apartment. "You very comfortable here, I see. *Est-ce que les meubles sont entièrement à vous?*"

"I don't understand you, Mademoiselle!" answered Violet, with a look of astonishment.

"*Oh! moi aussi j'ai un joli appartement, mais M. le Comte m'a donné les meubles, c'est que je trouve cela fort bien : ça nous reste toujours, même quand on déménage,*" and the French woman winked and laughed. "*Connaissez-vous mon ami, le Comte Booby? jeune homme très-galant, et facile à vivre? M. d'Arcy doit le connaître.*"

"I beg your pardon," said Violet Woodville, rising from her seat with burning cheeks, and unable any longer to bear the presence of her companion, "I beg your pardon, Mademoiselle, but I have an engagement, and am obliged to leave you."

This could not be misunderstood, even by Céleste, and she rose to take her leave, declaring, however, she would come again another day.

As she went out of the room she turned round with a knowing look, and observed, "*Il faut tâcher de se faire donner les meubles. C'est un grand avantage, croyez-moi, ma chère.*"

"What am I come to!" thought Violet to herself when she was alone, "that this wretched creature should venture to obtrude herself upon me thus."

The door burst open, and D'Arcy entered.

"My God, Violet!" he exclaimed, "what society have you learnt to keep all at once? how did that woman, that painted French devil, get into my house?"

"Oh! D'Arcy, she has been with me all this time: I could not help it."

D'Arcy rang the bell; on the servant entering, he said, "Let the person who is just gone away be refused in future all admittance to this house, on any plea whatsoever."

"You cannot be angry with me that I should have been forced to see her; you may suppose my horror of her," said Violet, deprecatingly, for she saw that D'Arcy was angry.

"I was surprised that you, who are so very inconveniently particular sometimes at seeing my friends, should be receiving a morning visit from such a woman, the boldest one even of her kind, I think."

"Well, she thought she had, nevertheless, *a right* to visit me."

"Psha," answered D'Arcy, coldly; and coldly his manner struck upon the heart of poor Violet.

She could not forbear saying, "I told you, D'Arcy, that I should live to be despised. What is it that has brought this woman upon me?"

"Spare me this sort of side-winded reproach."

"I beg your pardon, if I have offended; it was impossible to help expressing my disgust at that coryphée from the *Palais Royal*!"

D'Arcy spoke without feeling, and then withdrew, for he was bored; and Violet remained alone, to be preyed upon by the mortification occasioned by the events of the morning.

"The world's regard, that soothes, though half untrue," \*

\* Campbell.



was utterly wanting. She felt herself an outcast, and that he who had reduced her to be so considered, on a sort of *pas* with Madlle. Céleste, was himself angry with her that this should now be proved to be the case.

The injustice of the world is proverbial, yet Violet Woodville had not counted on being so soon exposed to its evil chances.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

“ ————— jealousy  
 Belonged not to her noble nature.  
 Humble she was, unconscious of the charms  
 Which might have turned the heads of half the world.  
 But she was trusting—full of confidence.  
 And now—what devil is’t that makes men’s hearts?—  
 She is forsaken—and, Oh Heavens! for whom?”

OLD PLAY.

ONE day, at the dinner-hour, D’Arcy did not appear. Violet fancied she must be mistaken in understanding that he had intended to dine at home.

“Do you know if Mr. d’Arcy has any engagement to-day?” she inquired of the servant.

“Don’t know, Mam. Mr. d’Arcy dines, most probably, at Mrs. Harcourt’s, Mam.”

“Why most probably at Mrs. Harcourt’s?”

“Master dines there most days that he does not dine any where else, Mam. If he does not dine there, he is sure to be intending to go there, or he will be to be heard of there, Mam, if you have any message to send.”

It was an under servant who spoke. Howell would have had more tact.

Violet Woodville returned no answer; but she sat, for nearly half an hour afterwards, in a profound reverie.

For some time past she had seen that D'Arcy was less at home, and that he was far less kind to her than formerly. But, not being of a jealous disposition, Violet, with her usual amiability, had attributed this change to herself alone. She was aware that she did not receive him with a smile, as formerly, and that she had not the power of amusing him: the depression of her spirits increased so much, that she was sometimes glad of D'Arcy's absence, at the same time that her existence hung upon him. She was like a plant that requires the sun, but withers if too much exposed to it. She could not always endure the restraint of appearing happy, while her heart was profoundly miserable; and she could neither conceal her grief, nor bear that D'Arcy should have the pain of witnessing it.

On the plea of the change within herself, she excused D'Arcy's frequent absences and occasional instances of unkindness in his manner. She had not grown to think that he actually *loved* her less; and if she had, it was still another thing to think that he had learnt to love some one else better.

Many women might have jumped to this conclusion more readily; but then Violet was not naturally jealous, and always felt inclined to think favourably of every one. She was fearful of wronging D'Arcy, even in thought; for it would have been the means of destroying her last illusion. Nevertheless the clouds of sorrow were gathering over her head more and more heavily each day. Alas! for this fair young creature! She was a beautiful, but too frail a plant to resist the most pitiless storm to which she could be exposed.

On a certain Tuesday evening, whilst Violet was sitting at home, endeavouring to read, and secretly worried in a way she would not allow to herself, at not having seen D'Arcy the whole day, the servant entered, to say that the box-keeper from Ebers' wanted to speak to her. Violet desired he might be shown up.

The ex-officio of Mr. Ebers came with a proposal to induce her to change her box for a smaller one on the other side of the house. "If you will give it up to us, Ma'am, for this night only, we will deduct it from your nights, and charge you nothing for the smaller box." Violet acquiesced, and added she would always be willing to give up that box for a smaller one, at a less price.

"It is larger than I want, and I am quite indifferent as to what side of the house my box is on; indeed I always thought it larger and more expensive than I required."

"We made Mr. d'Arcy, Ma'am, the offer of the box you will have to-night, but he did not see it, and took the larger box, because it was the only one we had left on that side."

"I will speak to Mr. d'Arcy about it; and if you are willing to make the exchange, I think it would answer much better for me to do so."

Mr. — said he had no objection; he could at any time let the box she was in possession of with advantage. "A box like yours, Ma'am, pays us well, and better, on the whole, in letting it by single nights, when we have already one subscriber for the alternate week."

Violet Woodville depended on seeing D'Arcy that day, before the time for going to the Opera; but eight o'clock came and he had not been home. She then remembered to have heard that a division in the House was expected. It was a new opera, and Violet, who had not yet seen it, was anxious to be there at the commencement. She knew how useless it might be to wait for D'Arcy's return, and she departed, leaving with the servants the number of her box, in case he came in time to join her.

On this evening, Violet Woodville felt rather happier than usual; a sensation which we all experience at times without comprehending the means by which this variation of our spirits has been wrought; being unwilling to allow that the air we breathe, the very aspect of the street we inhabit, or, above all, our own health, may be the sole cause of the change. On such occasions, we much prefer indulging in the belief of presentiments of good and evil, as if there was not enough mystery in our being, without extending its influence to things so trivial. But this is very natural, for it is flattering to the "pride that apes humility."

The house was nearly filled when Violet entered her box. She placed herself as usual, so as to be seen as little as possible, and her maid, Marietta, was obliged to follow the example of her mistress.

The house on that evening presented one of its most brilliant *coups-d'œil*.

Violet's box was on the tier above the dress circle. There happened to be only one vacant box in the whole row, and that was exactly opposite. During the interval of the first and second act, a lady entered, and took possession of the seat nearest the stage.

She was young, strikingly handsome, and beautifully dressed. Violet recognised her as Mrs. Harcourt; but how different, how improved, since she last beheld her!

Violet Woodville contemplated her former friend, not with envy, but with a mixed sensation of surprise, curiosity, and undefinable melancholy. She had never before been struck with the amazing chasm that fate, or conduct (as my readers will have it) had placed between them. There was such an air of satisfaction about the one,—there was such a distinction between the honoured wife of Hugh Harcourt, Esq., and the mistress of George D'Arcy, Esq. The one, courted, admired, and respected,—the other, conscious of disgrace, and only anxious to avoid notoriety!

Is it because she has been virtuous, and I have not? was the question that obtruded itself upon Violet Woodville; and then she thought of the past, and was lost in reflections, all tending to make her remember that time was, when their chances had been equal; and when, if either might have envied the other, she had been the person to be envied. On one side, every thing had been gained: worldly honours, and a good character withal. On the other, all had been wrecked! These thoughts, and such as these, occurred to the mind of poor Violet, as she sat mournfully contemplating the brilliant Mrs. Harcourt.

One dandy after another entered, and disappeared from her box; to all she appeared to give the same reception, but she would not have looked so handsome, if the triumph of gratified vanity had not lighted up her countenance, as Violet had seen it do in days of yore. She could not abstract her observation from her old companion, and her attention was finally riveted upon her, when she saw Mrs. Harcourt suddenly turn her head from the stage, for the purpose of saluting D'Arcy, as at that moment he entered her box. One or two other persons then left it, and D'Arcy, taking a vacant seat, appeared to have much to say to Mrs. Harcourt, and to be troubled with no desire of attending to the opera.

In vain did Violet watch, hoping that D'Arcy, after a reasonable

time, would withdraw, as the previous visitors had done; but no! *he* stayed.

She watched his countenance; it was gay and smiling. She observed Mrs. Harcourt; she was radiant. They talked earnestly; D'Arcy more particularly so; and he kept gazing at his companion in a way that was quite unnecessary. In short, the most unpractised eye would have suspected a flirtation.

For the first time in her life, Violet Woodville felt really jealous. How can I describe the nature of the sick and sinking heart with which she adopted the conviction that D'Arcy loved another?

There are some moments so painful in their endurance, we would gladly forget that they belong to human existence—moments in which it would have been better to have been sleeping the sleep of death, than to have lived and suffered their anguish.

No tears rose to the eyes of Violet, for jealousy despises the relief of tears; but she turned faint—no incident, at that moment, could have affected her. The earth might have rolled beneath her feet, but, while life remained, she would have experienced but one sensation.

But I will not dwell on this theme: I will rather say, in the words of a beautiful writer—“*Das Herz thut ihm allzu weh denn er hat ähnliches dinge erlebt, et scheut sich in der Erinnerung auch von ihrem Schotten. Du kennest warscheinlich ein ohnliche Gefühl, liebe Leser, denn so ist nur einmal der sterblichen Geschick.*”

She who suffered remained for a while like a person in a miserable dream. A sound of mirth, a song expressive of human joy when most triumphant, then burst upon her hearing, and awoke Violet from her trance of despair.

She listened to the music: it was so acutely in contrast with her feelings, that she exclaimed, almost aloud, “*Could there be then so much happiness ever known upon earth!*”

The duet was encored, and then the curtain fell; and, while the pit bestowed its deafening plaudits, Violet Woodville sank back in her chair, and all but fainted.

While Violet was hastening home, to indulge in her misery, D'Arcy remained at the Opera, unconscious of the anguish he had occasioned, occupying these idle moments in criticizing the ballet,

and in admiring, with his eyes, the beautiful face and figure of Mrs. Harcourt.

"Where is Harcourt to-night?" he inquired.

"At Crockford's, I suspect. I wish you would persuade him not to go there so much. I know he will be induced to play."

"I have put him on his guard once or twice, when he has been disposed to listen to me; but why not exert your influence?"

"Oh, Mr. Harcourt seldom allows me to advise him—and he is so easily irritated," Mrs. Harcourt exclaimed, and then stopped short in her sentence.

"Surely not with you? He must be as much your captive as ever."

"Mr. d'Arcy, you must know better than that," said Emily, in a half reproachful voice.

"I cannot understand any man not being at your feet—but then—he is—he is not worthy of you."

"He is a spoilt child, and every now and then regrets having married me. I should be wretched if I did not know that whoever had my place, Harcourt would not be in the least happier."

"No, indeed. Heavens, what man could complain if he possessed you!"

D'Arcy was enabled to hazard these *fadaises*, and made aware that they would be tolerated, by their forming the accompaniment to Mrs. Harcourt's abuse of her husband; and he put so much unction into his manner, that the matter was not ridiculed. However, Mrs. Harcourt thought it time to interpose with,—“What nonsense! I am not better than others; but I talk to you as I would to an intimate friend, who understands Harcourt as well as I do myself; you must not make me speeches,—I don't like compliments.”

"I don't wonder at that, you must be sick of them,—you, who have so many admirers."

"Well, if I have, you may suppose I know how much they are worth."

"True; but it may happen that you may be admired, and create a lasting impression where you don't intend it."

"No, no, men are so vain, it seldom happens that they bestow

their serious attention upon a married woman, unless they think they shall be well received."

D'Arcy thought this was very true, but his acquiescence he forbore to pronounce,—he only went on enlarging upon the involuntary passion Mrs. Harcourt was capable of inspiring. She listened and smiled,—for she was vain, and she liked the language of admiration, especially from D'Arcy. She did not, however, listen at her ease, because she was afraid of being said to flirt with him. She did not quite know how far her position would exempt her from the remarks of those on whose fiat she placed her dependence. In short, poorwoman! she could not consider herself to be sufficiently established to feel assured that she might flirt to any extent, and still be deemed infallible. So she desired the world should see that she was courted by D'Arcy, but, at the same time, she thought it wiser, being only a *parvenue*, that she should not give rise to criticisms upon her conduct, which spiteful, but omnipotent, and, perhaps, jealous gods and goddesses, might render the instruments of her destruction. Mrs. Harcourt had already learned that the toleration of the world was not impartial; she remembered, therefore, that time was passing, and that D'Arcy had been seen during a considerable interval in her box. The ballet was all but over.

"Mr. d'Arcy," she said, therefore, half in joke and half in earnest, "people who have no discrimination will say that I am flirting, if you stay here any longer."

D'Arcy took the hint, and departed. He perfectly understood the policy on which she acted, and was quite willing to humour her.

"Violet," said D'Arcy, next day, "I was very sorry not to get to you at the Opera last night, but the House sat so late I could not manage it."

"You went to the Opera?" said Violet, interrogatively, and trembling while she spoke.

"Yes; but I knew it was past your hour of staying, so I did not go to your box. How did you like the new opera?"

D'Arcy scarce heard the answer to his question, and he did not in the least observe the dejected air of Violet Woodville. He was just then thinking over the speech of a political adversary, against



whom he meant that very evening to pit his own eloquence in the ensuing debate.

On her part, Violet ascertained that, not having previously returned home, D'Arcy had gone to the Opera without hearing of her having exchanged her box, and she learnt, besides, that when at the Opera, he had not taken the trouble of finding out whether she had attended it or not,—at least not until he quitted Mrs. Harcourt, and *then*, indeed, it was “past” Violet’s usual hour for retiring.

Violet saw that at this present moment D'Arcy was preoccupied by politics, and that he was thinking more of public than of private affairs.

“He is caring more for his ambition than even for Mrs. Harcourt; and as for me——”

She left off thinking her sentence, but she garnered up her feelings, and gathered strength from his indifference to disguise them carefully. There is nothing which so effectually, or so disagreeably, checks the exposure of our sentiments as the finding another person as unmindful as he is unprepared to receive the communication.

While she felt so unhappy, perhaps D'Arcy had never, at any period, been more contented with his existence.

He was occupied in a way that suited his disposition, and, above all, the activity of his mind. In younger days he had been too dissipated, too roving, too independent likewise, to bend his thoughts systematically to the course of ambition. When younger, he was too arrogant to reason wisely, and too keen-sighted to belong to any party. But D'Arcy was exactly the person to become, intensely, a man of the world, in conduct more than in feeling. Our feelings remain as they were, much longer than we suppose; but the difference is, that our actions cease to be governed by them; we acquire, as D'Arcy did, “*L'esprit du monde, et l'esprit du monde est un esprit de souplesse et de ménagement.\**”

D'Arcy had no immediate desires to gratify, and no affections unfulfilled. The creature he had loved the most was Violet; but

\* Massillon.

she was no longer a novelty, and now that she did not enter into his pursuits, he was willing to be absorbed by them, and, for the sake of diversion, to flirt with Mrs. Harcourt, to the prejudice of the unfortunate being whose happiness he had taken into his own hands; and he made but small allowances for the melancholy that was overcasting her existence. He could say to himself, "She should consider that this air of woe must be very disagreeable to me; it makes me prefer something else;—I must go where I shall escape this sort of ennui."

It was undoubtedly a want of calculation on the part of Violet, who should have reflected that D'Arcy would be displeased by her continual inclination to grieve. Nevertheless, she endeavoured, and imagined that she had succeeded in concealing her grief from him, on the subject of her parents,—in the same way as she strove to hide the pangs of jealousy which devoured her now. At all times, and at any cost to herself, she would have spared him pain, for there did not exist a more generous heart; but Violet did not herself know how easily her mind could be read. Besides, her health was failing, and she was losing her bodily strength.

While she remained abroad, the neglect of her parents did not so much surprise her. She thought it was merited, and she lived in hope. But when, on her arrival in England, she found that they had left it, and gone no one knew whither—when she could discover no means of ascertaining their fate, she was seized with the most vivid affliction. At first, D'Arcy had entered into her distress, till by degrees the subject tired him, and she was left undisturbed to commune with her grief.

That they might have suffered misfortunes,—that they might have died, believing her careless of their destiny; these, and all the imaginings that follow in the train of regrets, which we are led to fear are come too late, harassed her mind. Then it was that Violet Woodville recalled every act of kindness of her parents; above all, the thought of her father's goodness, and of her having been his greatest joy,—of the simplicity of his blunt affection,—of his honest pride in her beauty, and his spoiling love and tenderness in the days of her childhood!

She cherished such recollections as a feeling mind is wont to do

—those that are the most painful. She would not spare herself a single agony, and she, who would fain have been so kind, so considerate towards any thing that was human, became a prey to deep remorse! And, more than all, she had begun to doubt of D'Arcy's love; that love for which she had sacrificed every thing! —herself, and her parents!

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## CHAPTER XX.

"Oh! 'tis a fearful thing to feel,  
In this cold world, alone."

CAPT. D. L. RICHARDSON.

"You will go to the Breakfast, of course?" said D'Arcy, one morning, in Mrs. Harcourt's drawing-room.

"Certainly, as I am invited. Shall you go? — but it is no use asking, as it is not to be for a week."

"I will go, at all events, if you will take me?"

"Very well—yes—only—no—I am to take some one else, I believe."

"But in your barouche there is room?"

"There is," said Mrs. Harcourt, with some embarrassment.  
"But the world is so ill-natured. I think I had better not take you."

"You are very much afraid of the world!"

"If I am, am I wrong?"

"No, it is wise to fear the world, even if it interfere with your friendships!" answered D'Arcy, drily.

"If you really required me to take you to the Breakfast, I would do it with pleasure; but I know, well enough, a hundred other people will be too glad to do so, and no remarks will be made about them; whereas I am not a privileged person."

"I see," said D'Arcy; "but whatever cavalier you take, will belong to you for the day. I shall, therefore, not go at all."

Mrs. Harcourt hesitated, blushed a little, and then said, "You can join me in the evening: after dinner, people disperse about the garden. I will take some one whom I can get rid of."

Upon hearing this, D'Arcy's eyes grew rather brighter, and his manner better humoured, as he graciously assented to a proposition which was assuredly very flattering.

"Will you go to the Horticultural Gardens to-morrow?" he presently demanded.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Harcourt.

"At what time?"

"Any time: I have not thought of the time."

"Say at four, then?"

"Very well—only——"

"What?"

"Why, if you are going—shall you go?"

D'Arcy laughed.

"What I was about to say is, that if many people are there, don't join me at once—I shall walk to the further end."

At this moment the door opened, and Lady M—— was announced—the last person Mrs. Harcourt wished should have seen D'Arcy at her house, cautious as she was of giving umbrage to the world, and having always in view the obtaining a steady footing in that society in which, at first, she was only suffered.

Lady M—— was a lady whose suffrage Mrs. Harcourt eagerly desired to obtain, and one whose verdict against her she would have greatly feared. Lady M—— had ceased to be young. Her manners were dignified, and she might still be called handsome and magnificent in her appearance; altogether, it must be said that she was imposing in person, both in character and in demeanour. She went with the world; but she did not give her individual countenance to its vices. She blamed no one; but she had never been known to accord her protection where blame could be justly applied. Her understanding was too cultivated, her breeding too polished, to render her disagreeable; but still she was an alarming person to those who were not intimate with her.

In Lady M——'s collected manner of addressing Mrs. Harcourt

it was impossible to discover whether D'Arcy's presence had made an impression upon her for good or evil. He soon rose to take his leave, and as he did so, Mrs. Harcourt carelessly addressed him, saying, "I will give your message. In general Mr. Harcourt is always in and out of my drawing-room during the morning,—where he is to-day I don't know."

This little speech might serve as a blind to Lady M——, but, otherwise, it was not politic in Mrs. Harcourt to allow D'Arcy to be in the secret of the ready meanness of invention it displayed on her part, and, accordingly, his mouth was still curling with a sneer as he rode down St. James's Street.

It may be fairly asked whether D'Arcy seriously designed to seduce his friend Harcourt's wife. All that can be said is, that he despised Harcourt's character, and was more allied to him by intimacy than by friendship. Then, D'Arcy was habitually careless of others, and confident in himself. If his intentions were not really bad, he was still in a tortuous path, and no one ought to have known its dangers better than he did. There was safety in his not being in love with Mrs. Harcourt,—a fact he disguised from her, but not from himself; and, under false colours, he endeavoured to fathom her sentiments.

At first he had only been surprised by observing her transformation into a woman of fashion; but she had the art of rendering herself agreeable, and had spared no pains to make D'Arcy like her,—he was, of course, flattered. He liked her house, and gradually began to admire its mistress; he sought, perhaps, a compensation for the languor of his own home. By degrees D'Arcy was piqued into wishing to know more of Mrs. Harcourt. He began to think he was in duty bound to make love to her. The occupation pleased him, for he saw it pleased her, and she was much too handsome for him not to feel obliged to her for this. D'Arcy was spoilt—he had never acquired self-correction,—and he had not the weakness or the tenderness of disposition which leads to forbearance, and sometimes supplies the want of it.

One day, about this time, Violet Woodville was astonished by receiving an anonymous letter, the contents of which smote her like a death-blow.

The letter informed her of D'Arcy's "devoted passion," for

such were the words, for Mrs. Harcourt. She was warned to separate him from her, if possible, and to beware of Mrs. Harcourt, as her greatest enemy.

Some misfortunes become doubly certain when they are repeated by the world, which we had not taken into our confidence. So Violet Woodville felt it now, and she sat (like a person who has been stunned) for an hour with the letter in her hands.

No woman at such a moment is a competent judge of the best mode of acting ; but, in some cases, impulse supplies the place of judgment, and a jealous woman always, I believe, acts upon impulse, if she can. Had D'Arcy been in the house, Violet would have flown to him, shown him the letter, and have been contented when he had told her that all it said was false. Perhaps, too, moved by the sight of her grief, D'Arcy would have held himself bound to make his assurance true. But, alas ! D'Arcy was not there, and long before he returned to his home, which was not till very late the next morning, from the House of Commons, Violet had settled her plan of conduct, and determined to communicate with him by writing.

If I speak to him (she argued), I shall only embarrass myself by the anguish I cannot disguise : neither will I inflict any scene of this sort upon him—if D'Arcy has ceased to love me, perhaps it is my own fault. I know I am not what I used to be. I have become a clog to him. I will abstain from all upbraiding : whatever I suffer, have I not deserved it ? So argued Violet Woodville. Her spirit was incapable of revenge, and she preferred blaming herself to blaming another : besides, she began to fear that all her misfortunes had been merited by her.

Violet could not guess from whence the anonymous letter came, but concluded, at all events, that it was written by an enemy of D'Arcy's. I have neither friends nor enemies, she said to herself.

By the next day, Violet had written a letter to D'Arcy, which she intended should decide her fate. She would have given it on this morning, and was summoning resolution to do so, when D'Arcy addressed her, by saying he meant to go that afternoon to Putney.

The Harcourts had taken a villa there,—and in saying he was going thither, D'Arcy meant that he was going to their house.

Violet did not know this, however, and timidly she asked whom he was going to stay with. Timidly she spoke, for she was broken by sorrow, and, now that she imagined D'Arcy could be inconstant, she felt an increased sense of humiliation.

The little pride that remained to one so lowly, and self-condemning, was that which she derived from the affection of the person to whom she had deferred every sentiment, and surrendered all but her conscience. His love proved vacillating,—so, therefore, must be her main stay in life.

D'Arcy's sense of right and wrong unavoidably gave him a disagreeable sensation, at Violet's inquiry,—and he therefore chose to imagine it was made on purpose.

"I thought you knew. The Harcourts have taken a villa at Putney. What is the matter, Violet?" inquired D'Arcy, suddenly: for he beheld her turning very pale, and on his inquiry she hid her face in her hands.

D'Arcy felt shocked, and approached her, saying, "What is it, dearest?—tell me every-thing?"

"Oh, George! why do you ask me?" Violet Woodville exclaimed, bursting into long suppressed tears.

D'Arcy had not the dissimulation which would have induced him to feign total ignorance of the cause of her grief, and he said at once, "You surely are not so foolish as to be jealous of the Harcourts?"

"Indeed I am. D'Arcy, have I no reason to be so?"

"None, none, dearest!" D'Arcy replied, hastily; and, at that moment, he said to himself, "I will have done with that woman: what is she, compared to this one—who has loved me for myself alone, and who has none of the worldly-mindedness I have seen so much of, and which I despise so thoroughly?" So thought D'Arcy, but it did not enter into his mind to give up going to Putney that day; he had engaged himself, and he never dreamt of sacrificing twenty-four hours of amusement;—and to appear uncivil besides.

There was a point of difference mutually misunderstood. D'Arcy persevered in going to Putney, because he knew it was of no consequence to his new resolves whether he spent a day more or less in the society of Mrs. Harcourt. Violet, who knew not how



little he cared for her rival, deemed his going of serious importance.

D'Arcy thought it wise to treat her feelings lightly ; contenting himself, therefore, with an assurance that she wronged him, and that his heart was hers alone.

" No, George," said Violet, " you do not love me now, as you loved me once. It is not your fault. I don't blame you, D'Arcy. "

" My dear Violet, you shut yourself up, you grieve over past events, and then you get fanciful. You must trust more to me, and, above all, you must seek more amusement. "

In saying this, D'Arcy was not unreasonable ; for, as he was ignorant of the circumstances that rendered her jealous, he imagined her surmise to be wholly founded upon the knowledge of his frequent visits to Mrs. Harcourt, and that her low spirits had fostered the painful idea.

Violet hesitated, whether she should undeceive him, by explaining on what grounds her jealousy was founded ; but while she was yet thinking whether she should tell him all, or leave it to her letter, D'Arcy had observed the clock. " I find," said he, " if I intend to go at all, there is no time for delay ; " and he took her hand, evidently to bid her farewell. Violet no longer doubted about what she should do.

The very manner in which D'Arcy spoke, chased all explanation from her lips. She felt he had not then *time* to think of her. She composed herself, and asked how soon he would return.

" Probably to-morrow. "

" And you are not going to the Breakfast, to-morrow ? "

" No, I think not,—at all events, instead of going from Putney, I will come to town. It will be out of my way,—but what does that signify ?—I shall see you. "

" Oh ! if you would come back ! " exclaimed Violet, with sudden energy, " if but for a moment ! You can still go to the Breakfast, so easily from town. I don't know why, but I am sure I shall be miserable, if I do not see you to-morrow. I shall fancy I know not what ; and you must only pity me, and not be angry, for indeed there are moments when we cannot command ourselves. " Violet pressed her hand to her aching brow, and she looked very ill.

"Take care of yourself, dearest,—go out and dissipate these ideas which have seized hold of you. As if I did not love you ! —at present, I have no intention of going to the Breakfast ; at all events, you will see me at four to-morrow.

"Good bye, my love, and don't be silly," D'Arcy added, in a tone of mingled carelessness and kindness.

Violet smiled through the tears which were still hovering on her eyelids, and tried to look as if she would obey.

She felt a little re-assured when D'Arcy seemed so certain of his return next day ; but, as he was closing the door, she called to him, in a tremulous tone, "George, I hope you will not disappoint me. Pray come back to-morrow : I don't know why I desire it so, but I feel very unhappy."

"I shall certainly be here by four. Order the carriage. Try and amuse yourself. Is there anything I can do for you ?"

"Nothing—nothing."

"He is gone!" Violet involuntarily exclaimed, the next moment.

D'Arcy, before departing, would have endeavoured to soothe her more effectually, but he was afraid of encouraging her to give way to emotion, and he hardened his heart, by trying to think he was taking the best course in treating her grief lightly. Still, as he rode down the street, his mind misgave him, and he regretted that he had not attempted to penetrate more fully the motives of Violet's jealousy of Mrs. Harcourt. Certainly his leaving her, without a thorough explanation, was not the way to diminish her suspicions. Her looks of suffering, too, haunted him : D'Arcy had not been so struck by it till now, when the vision of her sorrowful face remained in his mind's eye ; and the impression became at length so strong, that he was turning his horse to gallop home. At that moment he was arrested by a servant of Mrs. Harcourt, who gave him a note, which, the man said, he was ordered to lose no time in taking to him.

The note contained a few lines from Mrs. Harcourt, begging D'Arcy, if he conveniently could, to be at Putney by six o'clock, as she wished to see him before her husband should come home.

D'Arcy knew that there could be no time to lose, if he meant to obey Mrs. Harcourt's wishes. He, therefore, rode quickly on, and Violet Woodville, if not forgotten, was at least neglected.



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CHAPTER XXI.

“ We know not the amount of misery  
The heart can bear, when, one by one, the illa  
Of life steal on us ; but alas ; there are  
Calamities which overwhelm at once,—  
Crushing the spirit by a sudden blow,—  
And leaving the poor victim powerless,  
Without a chance of struggling with his fate. ”

ANON.

IN the meantime Violet, sat at home, a prey to that gloomy depression, which is one of the most pitiable states of the mind.

She felt all the additional suffering arising from ill health ; for almost unremarked by herself, and quite uncared for, mental anxiety had long been preying upon her constitution, but, though delicate, being naturally healthy, the injury was slow in manifesting its symptoms. She grew weak, however, and became often restless with the fever of debility.

She felt ill, but not comprehending the cause, and not considering that health, or the want of it, could possibly add to, or diminish, her unhappiness, it is not wonderful that she took no care to check the growing evil.

Now, however, as Violet sat alone, she made an effort to dispel her low spirits, perhaps from feeling how overwhelming they were becoming. She tried her piano-forte, but the first notes she

struck called forth painful recollections, and renewed her tears. She endeavoured to read, but at the end of half an hour she found she had only been studying the same page without comprehending a single line.

She flew to the open window. The sun was shining brightly over the green surface of the Regent's Park. It was a charming afternoon in the month of June. Violet heard the rattle of carriages, and watched the britschkas of the London ladies as they rolled on to the park. Their appearance, as they dashed along, in their brilliant attire and their open vehicles, conveyed an idea of gaiety, and of minds at ease, which the reality, if known, might have failed in proving.

Violet gave a sigh, and said, inwardly, "All those people cannot be happy,—but they are not as wretched as I am;" and she looked about for some object more in unison with herself.

A poor and ragged old woman was tottering along the pavement, and once or twice addressed the passengers for relief. Violet sent her some money. The mendicant looked up at the window, crying out, "Many thanks to you, lady; I am a happy woman to what I was, and my poor dear only son, who is dying of the fever, will want for nothing now, till it please God to take him. May God bless you, and pour the joy into your heart that you have given to mine, by your bounty;" and, with a countenance expressive of real content, the beggar departed.

"Her only son dying!—and that woman is rendered comparatively happy! She has no feeling, and I cannot pity her," exclaimed Violet; and she turned away, when an organ-boy struck up "*Portrait Charmant*," and Violet paused to give way to the associations the street-worn air conjured up in her mind.

An old romantic air like that of "*Portrait Charmant*," has, sometimes, from its very commonness, a more powerful effect than the finest song out of the "*Puritani*."

With the former we are so familiar; in our happy hours we have so despised it, as that eternal thing; in our busy moments we have so contemned the tiresome organ-boy with his one tune; and, as we have driven along, and at the turn of a street have caught the weary notes of an organ, one has said, "How sick I am of that old French air!" and then we have pursued our way,

and forgiven and forgotten the antiquated romance. But in the time of sorrow, of *inactive* sorrow,—then, if such an air as “Portrait Charmant” be heard mingling with the vulgar street sounds, it will strike you as it never did before, and in listening to the notes you find it is, somehow, taking a gentle revenge for all the contumely you have cast upon its hacknied sounds in days gone by.

So now was it the case with Violet; and when the music had died in the distance, her mournful feelings seemed unaccountably revived in strength by the passing notes of an old hand-organ.

Violet ordered her carriage. She was fearful of remaining longer in her present mood, and the idea occurred that if she did not exert herself, her reason would be impaired; her mind was growing morbid, even much more so than she suspected.

At the moment the carriage was ready, a servant brought up a card, the owner of which requested to see her if she should be at leisure.

“Monsieur Larray,

Professor of Music,”

was printed upon the card !

Violet rose from her sofa, and, in excessive agitation, was going to rush down the staircase. She recollected herself, and desired that the gentleman might be shown up stairs.

Henri Larray, for it was indeed he, had grown a more staid-looking man than at the period of his introduction to the reader at the commencement of this story. His vivacious countenance had acquired that subdued look which, somehow or other, the face of a married man always does acquire. Henri had not broken his heart entirely on Mrs. Harcourt's account, and he had married a pretty Englishwoman, with whom he enjoyed domestic happiness.

On finding himself in the presence of Violet Woodville, he testified embarrassment, and more gravity of demeanour than he might have done had he met her under different auspices. But he must have seen at once that she was the same in outward seeming. An erring course had not in her, as it does in so many others, led to corresponding manners.

Violet flushed on beholding her old acquaintance, and her

heightened colour, which remained by her, prevented Larray from observing in her an appearance of illness, which, at another time, he would have easily discerned.

On his entrance, Violet Woodville held out her hand, without speaking, and it was some minutes before she could utter a word.

"You must be surprised," said Larray, "at my abrupt visit, but it is business that makes me have the honour of calling; should it be inconvenient to you now, pray allow me to come another day."

Violet assured him that she had no engagement, and expected no interruption. This she said in a marked tone, glad to intimate that he needed not fear the arrival of D'Arcy.

Larray then repeated that he was come on business,—family affairs of her own, of importance to her to be acquainted with.

At this announcement, Violet trembled violently. She felt certain she was going to hear tidings of her parents, and inwardly she was almost overcome by a rush of feeling, strangely compounded of joy and terror. Visibly agitated, she attempted to essay an inquiry, if he had news of her nearest relations, but the words died away upon her lips; at length she articulated:—"My father! my mother?"

"I am come from France, from Tours," said Larray, "and an office has devolved upon me, which I am anxious to execute to the best of my abilities. M. Dupas has been living at Tours the last few years, and"—

"But my parents! my father?" interrupted Violet. Larray looked anxiously at her, at the same time with an air of curiosity, as if there was something he wished to learn. A sigh escaped him as he said evasively, "Yes, part of the time your father was with M. Dupas at Tours."

"And my mother, how is she?"

"Mrs. Woodville is quite well," replied he, in a lighter tone.

So far, the conversation had indirectly tended to reassure Violet Woodville, and, to avoid immediate interruption, she allowed her companion to resume speaking, without further interrogations, trusting to hear all she desired from his lips.

Larray proceeded to state, that M. Dupas had been residing at

Tours, but latterly had gone to Bagnières, on account of his declining health.

"Has he been ill, then?" exclaimed Violet, "the dear, good old man? Has he ever deigned to cast a thought upon me,—who have proved myself so unworthy? I was his favourite once, you know, M. Larray," she added, with a forced smile; and then she swallowed the tears that rose, and almost choked her.

"He never forgot you,—be assured of that, and he always retained his affection for you."

"Oh, then why have I been abandoned by him, if indeed he did not think it best to forget me?" and Violet clasped her hands and wept.

Larray waited till her emotion had subsided, and then resumed the conversation by saying, "Do not think you were neglected. M. Dupas made inquiries about you, through various channels. All the time you were abroad, he knew where you were residing, and that you were well. He had wandered so much in his youth that he has acquaintance in many cities of Europe, and—and Mr. d'Arcy's official capacity rendered it easy to ascertain at all times where he resided, and"—

"Yes, yes, I see,—he could easily learn where I was, but why not write me one line of consolation? Did he think I had no desire to learn some intelligence regarding my family? He could not suppose that I had suddenly become dead to all human ties! Did it not occur to him that I had no means of obtaining any information concerning my father?—he must have known that my parents did not write to me. From him they concealed nothing. It would have been most charitable to have told me any thing concerning them :—and M. Dupas, too, who was always so kind, and so considerate. My father!—Oh, Monsieur Larray, you cannot imagine what have been my feelings at times! To have had to bear, without any alleviation, the sense of continual remorse, till my heart has longed to burst!—to have thought of my poor father and mother as I have done,—to have inquired for them fruitlessly, and to have gone on without seeing a period to such misery! To have lived on, in uncertainty of their existence,—to desire only to die, even if I were unforgiven by them! If you could feel as I have felt, you would pity me! Yet do not think he has



been unkind," added Violet, fearful lest D'Arcy should be censured; "far from it. It is only myself I have to blame, and for every thing.

"And now, where are my parents; and are they both quite well?"

Henri Larray changed countenance; he appeared greatly embarrassed, and continued silent.

"Where are they?" demanded Violet again, while she fixed her eyes upon him.

"I have nothing to communicate that will not be painful for you to hear," said Larray, nervously, and as if making an effort with himself.

"I was not aware how uninformed you have been of the events that have taken place——Nay, listen to me—do not interrupt me, dear Miss Woodville, for your sake and for mine. First, let me say, banish from your mind all idea of neglect or unkindness; nothing of the sort was contemplated towards you. M. Dupas looked forward to seeing you himself some day, and communicating to you all his kind wishes and intentions on your behalf. I was residing a long time at Tours, and he trusted me with his confidence; and, at his death——"

"Is he, then, dead? My God!"

"He is dead; but he died happy, and at a good old age—he was seventy. Let us rejoice that his end was tranquil, and that, till within a week of his death, his health had been good: he thought he should be able to re-visit England at the period of your return, and to see you again—his dearest child, as he always called you."

"God's will be done!" said Violet, after a pause, and in the resigned tone of one who is accustomed to suffering.

"And my father?"

"Ah! what shall I say!" exclaimed Larray. "Mine is a cruel task, and one I almost shrink from, now that I see its extent."

"Don't keep me in suspense—I can bear anything—I am prepared for anything. Do you not know we only come into the world to suffer?—and, therefore, it is all right, and as it should be."

"God grant you to be happy *some* time. You must not despair—you must hope always. You would have heard from our

dear old friend concerning your father, but that it became unavailing, and then he thought it better not to write."

"Unavailing!" exclaimed Violet Woodville, with force.

"Unavailing!—then now I understand you. What could make it unavailing, except that—*he is dead?*"

Larray bent an affirmative in silence.

"He is dead!" repeated Violet.

She changed colour alarmingly, but she did not faint. Her previous state of excitement subsided, and the effect rendered her apparently resigned. Larray was exceedingly relieved by her unexpected composure. In a few minutes she requested to hear further.

"Mr. Woodville's health, when he came to Tours, was greatly impaired, and he was still under considerable excitement. He had a friend, however, who never lost sight of him; and when at last it became necessary to place him in confinement, M. Dupas engaged for him to live in the house of a physician whom he knew. The hearing of this is painful, but perhaps Mr. Woodville suffered less in consequence of this bereavement than he otherwise might have done; and his death-bed was undisturbed by anxiety. M. Dupas intended more than once to write to you, to tell you all this; but he was deterred, by fearing the impression that would be made upon you, by learning the state in which your father died: latterly, he fully intended seeing you again himself, and doing all he could to soften such cruel intelligence—his death prevented this: he has left you his heir, and I am his executor. I acknowledge I trusted not to find you so completely unprepared for all my fatal intelligence."

"No; no one would tell me that I drove my father mad!" ejaculated Violet; and she spoke in a tone that was harsh and unlike herself.

Larray endeavoured to speak words of comfort, but was met by no encouragement; he hardly knew if she heard him, and felt at a loss to comprehend the nature of her sensations. Violet appeared to be more absorbed in deep thought than in grief, and, when he spoke, his words seemed to be unnoticed by her. Larray was glad when he found an opportunity of saying, that he had a letter for her from her mother. This seemed to recall the unhappy girl

to consciousness, and she said, inarticulately, "My mother, then,—my poor mother! Is not her heart broken?—I have done *that*, too!"

Larray actually coloured, as, in producing the letter of Violet's mother, he still withheld it, and, with great embarrassment, began to remind her that two years had elapsed since her father's death, and that Mrs. Woodville, in short, had, about six months since, married a rich manufacturer at Tours, and, consequently, it was to be presumed that she was no longer inconsolable for her family misfortunes.

Violet's astonishment, and even indignation, were sufficiently visible, although she said nothing. She opened the letter of Madame Nicoise (her mother's present appellation) with a trembling hand, read it, and tossed it upon the table, muttering words which Larray could not catch,—but her gesture was expressive of contempt. Then, recollecting herself, she abruptly exclaimed, "But that is nothing,—and then my father does not know it, perhaps, for there is no saying,—none of us know that;" and Violet relapsed into abstraction.

Her mother had written to acquaint her with her marriage, to lament over "her dearest child's" unfortunate conduct, which had been the means of destroying her father; and concluded by saying that she (Madame Nicoise) not having informed the Sieur Nicoise of Violet's undutiful derelictions, she thought it would be most prudent for them not even to correspond: inasmuch as, on account of M. Nicoise's extreme respectability, he could not possibly acknowledge a connexion with her "sweet Violet," the circumstances considered, etc. etc. But that the fortune of M. Dupas rendering her independent, if she chose to quit Mr. d'Arcy, many plans were open to her, and Madame Nicoise hoped that, if she had not lost her beauty, it would be very possible for her to meet with some one who would marry her, and then she would be quite restored to a position rendering her worthy of being acknowledged by Madame Nicoise, and which, she declared, she should then be most happy to do.

Larray now thought it time to take his leave. He wished he knew more of Violet's domestic life, that he might have ascertained how much the kindness of D'Arcy was likely to console her.

He asked permission to call again at three o'clock the following day.

At these words Violet appeared to recall some idea foreign to her grief, and she answered, hastily, "At three—no, not at three."

"I fear I shall be engaged before that hour," observed Larray; "will you permit me, then, to name the day after?"

"Be it so," was the reply; and Larray, after again endeavouring to say kind words, withdrew.

On leaving the house he bethought himself of inquiring if Mr. d'Arcy was staying in town, and living at that house. The answers were in the affirmative. Either D'Arcy's being gone to Putney was forgotten, or the circumstance did not interfere with the footman's notions of his master being resident in town, and thus Larray was not disturbed by fearing that Violet would be left too long to grieve in solitude.

When Violet Woodville was left alone, after the dreadful communications she had been receiving, a sense of misery stole over her, which was so stunning that for a long time she remained almost insensible; that is, insensible to the frightful turn her own thoughts were taking, as they brooded over past scenes, and her imagination revelled in recollections that were the most harrowing.

When the servant entered and announced dinner, Violet appeared to misunderstand him, and the man's astonishment was immeasurable when finally she exclaimed "Never!" Her foreign maid came to her to make the same inquiry, and then Violet, with more composure, only said she wished the dinner to be removed, and that she was not well.

The evening drew on, and still Violet sat alone in her drawing-room, while one thought, more terrible than another, crowded on her brain.

She wished to die, and could have exclaimed, with melancholy earnestness, like Massinger's heroine in the play,

"Why art thou slow, thou seat of trouble—Death,  
To stop a wretch's breath,  
That calls on thee, and offers her sad heard  
A prey unto thy dart?"

The twilight was drawing on ; the distant hum of voices and of carriages was subsiding ; the chirping of the birds, in the small surrounding gardens and the park trees, came more loudly on the ear, and the dying sounds and the comparative silence of an evening in that part of the town where Violet resided, succeeded to the noisy gaiety of a London summer's day in the season.

This additional external repose was not beneficial to Violet Woodville, and the stillness, as well as the growing obscurity, painfully encouraged the ideas that were breaking her heart.

By degrees the room became peopled with phantoms, and the furniture and the shadows became images of her lost parent, till at last she fancied her father's form was distinctly visible at the end of the room, and she rose to approach it with staggering energy : the door opening, and the servant bringing in lights, occasioned a powerful and very necessary revulsion to these horrible conjurations of an excited imagination.

Restored to a better comprehension by seeing another person, and the bright light of the argand lamp, Violet was then in a condition to feel more reasonably, if not with an anguish less intense.

At length she threw herself upon her bed, and might have slept, perhaps, from exhaustion and fatigue ; but she was also under the keenest nervous irritation, and, besides, sleep,

" Like the world, his ready visit pays  
Where fortune smiles ! The wretched he forsakes !  
Swift on his downy pinions flies from woe,  
And lights on lids unsullied with a tear. "

The next morning Violet was ill enough for her maid to urge her to send for medical assistance. This was positively refused, however. Marietta, nevertheless, was surprised and alarmed, and asked if Mr. d'Arcy would be home that day ?

" At three o'clock," replied her mistress ; and Marietta argued to herself, that if D'Arcy were to return so soon, Violet would not lose much time in being under his authority and care.

No wonder that Violet attracted the observation and the compassion of her maid : her manner was unusual, and her cheeks crimsoned with fever. She had eaten nothing for four-and-twenty

hours, and she still continued without food, although she accepted some tea.

It was not easy to comprehend what was passing in her mind; but while she still could think that D'Arcy loved her, if but a little, one small white speck dwelt, no doubt, upon her dark horizon.

At three o'clock that afternoon she sent for Marietta, who, on entering her mistress's presence, was glad to see her smile; and, in a cheerful tone, she pointed to the clock on the mantel-piece, exclaiming,

"It is three o'clock! He will be home directly."

And then, waving her hand, Violet dismissed her maid.

In the midst of her misery, Violet Woodville clung to the recollection that, at three that day, D'Arcy had promised her he would be home. Sometimes, in great unhappiness, we attach an apparently unwarrantable anxiety to a slight circumstance, which, trifling as it may be, is yet agreeable to us. It can hardly be called hope that leads us to cherish this, but the inherent propensity born with us, of clinging, to the last, to the faintest shade of happiness that can yet possibly be ours.

D'Arcy was then indeed the sole remaining tie to Violet Woodville; and the desire she manifested for his return, and the confidence with which she expected it, showed the yearning of a human heart towards the only event that could occur which might confer upon it a consolation: that consolation, however, in this instance, was denied.

Three o'clock passed away, but D'Arcy returned not!



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## CHAPTER XXII.

“ That very day  
A feast was held, when, full of mirth,  
Came, crowding thick as flowers that play  
In summer winds, the young and gay,  
And beautiful of this bright earth. ”

“ And I forgot my home; my birth  
Profaned my spirit, sunk my brow.  
And revelled in gross joys of earth,  
Till I became—what I am now. ”

MOORE.

LET us revert to D'Arcy's proceedings on the previous day. As he rode along towards Putney he grew curious to learn why Mrs. Harcourt had ventured so particularly to request his presence before the arrival of her husband.

He found her beautifully and becomingly dressed, reclining upon a low ottoman placed near the window of her pretty drawing-room opening upon the lawn; the room was scented with the perfume of large boxes of mignonette, with heliotrope and verbena, and the blinds of the apartment more closed than usual, for the day had been uncommonly hot. The rays of the evening sun, as they fell through the chintz curtains, bestowed a softness and mellowness on each object that was shared by Emily herself; at leas



D'Arcy thought he had never seen her look so truly handsome. Her dark curls were drooping over a branch of red *Camelia Japonica*, which had been carelessly thrown on her little work-table of inlaid Sèvres, and the flowers tinted her cheek with their brilliancy, whilst, mingling with her hair, they contrasted with its shade of ebony.

"I am glad you are come," she exclaimed, with an appearance of anxiety, "for you can tell me perhaps if what I hear is true. Has Harcourt lost a large sum at Crockford's within the last three days?"

"I have not heard of it; who has said that he has?"

"Thank Heaven, then, it may not be true; for I think if my husband had been in difficulty, he would have gone to you for advice. Two or three persons have suspected it, however, and have told me of it, which has made me very uneasy."

"I am sorry for that, as it may be the case; but why not speak yourself to Harcourt about it?" asked D'Arcy.

"Oh," replied Mrs. Harcourt with a smile which was followed by a sigh, "I have never found my interference answer; I would fain play the part of the good wife, and do everything that reason could suggest to please or to be of use, but nothing of the sort is within my range: I have discovered this at last, and therefore, although I am anxious, I venture upon no inquiries, in order to avoid discomfort, and something more—a taunt perhaps—that I should have the right to offer advice. I am kept in due submission, I assure you," added Emily, in a tone between disgust and sadness, while she looked at D'Arcy with a look that seemed to say, "Have I not your compassion?"

The eyes that put this question were answered silently, but very eloquently, by other eyes, and eyes that sought to penetrate even more than to respond.

"As Harcourt's friend, why does she abuse him to me?" thought D'Arcy. "Does she desire me to become *her* friend and not *his*?" D'Arcy was clearly arguing that to be the friend of both had become incompatible.

"I believe my husband to have lost a great deal of money lately," continued Mrs. Harcourt, "and I feared that this might be some new affair of the kind, which would be more ruinous than all the rest. He has been out of spirits, and I judged a little from that; from you I thought to learn the truth."

"Depend on doing so the moment I ascertain it. What lamentable folly in Harcourt to persevere as he does in all his caprices; and, with you for his wife, to fancy he has a reason in the world to be discontented!"

"Is it Mr. d'Arcy who says that?" asked Emily, smiling and slightly colouring.

"It *is* I who say so. I am not blind to your beauty or your charming character."

"I am no better than others. If I care little for the world and less for admiration, it is because experience has taught me how to value both," was Mrs. Harcourt's modest response.

D'Arcy had an odd mixture of sincerity in his disposition; with him, in fact, it was rather a kind of pride which made him refuse to allow his understanding to appear subservient to any of the subtuges with which people sometimes venture to impose upon others; so as he had not yet arrived at believing in Mrs. Harcourt's despal of the world or the world's admiration, he could not help replying by saying, "You are mistaken, you are indifferent to neither; how I wish you were, and how I should like to make you feel, far more than you do, the wide distinction that exists between one that would study your welfare with carefulness, and the admirers, the thousand and one would-be lovers that hover in your train, and whom I sometimes see you regard, when those who really care for you do not venture to interrupt them."

"Venture? and why should *you* not, if you wish it?"

"I often wish it."

"Since when?"

"Since I grew to like you very much, and since you must have seen that I have done so."

"I am not so vain as to have thought that I had attracted your regards; I have always deemed myself the last person who could have done so."

"Be more honest with me, and acknowledge the truth: you must have seen how, each day, I have been growing more and more,—anything but indifferent to you."

"You are amusing yourself with me, Mr. d'Arcy."

"Then I have chosen very ill the time to do so," answered D'Arcy, in a winning voice, "when I find you worried by domestic

annoyances which I cannot alleviate. Why do me the injustice to suppose this? You do not suppose it, I think," continued he: and he took the hand of Mrs. Harcourt, and retained it, long after she had made a feeble effort to withdraw it. "You *say* this only."

The conversation was interrupted, for the door opened, and Mr. Harcourt entered.

Harcourt expressed himself delighted to see D'Arcy, and begged he would always come and dine with them when he could get away from town.

"I almost wish I were you, D'Arcy," said Mr. Harcourt, when they sat alone after dinner, "you have a happier time of it than I have. You have become a politician, and have a pursuit, whereas I have none."

"But you have a home, a wife and children, and a fine fortune, if managed well."

"I don't care about children, and I am always bored, — there is something d—d unsatisfactory in the existence I lead," continued Harcourt, with a sigh, — not from the depth of his heart, but the depth of his *ennui*. "I tire so of everything, — the House of Commons does not interest me, I am not sufficiently keen about politics; and, except when I am at Melton, I hate the country. I am not a county man; as long as my rents are paid, I cannot interest myself in farms and ditches, roads and hay-cocks, militia reviews and those eternal quarter-sessions, and assizes — to me all these things are positive nuisances. Then I am sick of the continent, — of Paris especially; the French women are so affected, — the men are such coxcombs, they irritate my bile, as I cannot knock down nine out of every ten of them. I live, too, with people that do not suit me; I feel that I am losing my best years, without any satisfaction, — and I see no remedy, as I cannot live over again the greater part of my life, so as to act differently in some matters that are now irremediable."

It was evident that Harcourt was alluding to his marriage, — an event which, in D'Arcy's opinion, had answered much better than he had prognosticated it possibly could. D'Arcy never felt less in a humour to bestow consolation on his friend, and much preferred that task when his wife was the object of it.

The following morning, Mr. Harcourt went to town early, having engagements, but he recommended D'Arcy to remain at Putney and to go from thence to the Breakfast: that Breakfast to which Mrs. Harcourt had so particularly inquired of D'Arcy, some ten days previously, if he should go, — to which inquiry, it may be remembered, he had replied in the affirmative.

D'Arcy spent the morning in loitering about the garden with Emily, and in endeavouring, more plainly than he had ever done before, to give her the impression that he was deeply in love with her. He was not repulsed by Mrs. Harcourt, as a better woman would have repulsed him; and D'Arcy might flatter himself that he had gained ground.

"It is two o'clock," said Emily, turning towards the house, "I must dress."

"Not yet, surely!" exclaimed D'Arcy.

"Indeed I must," said she smiling. "You forget that a lady never dresses under an hour; as it is, I shall only get there by five o'clock." And so saying, Mrs. Harcourt stepped into the drawing-room.

"I really did not think it was so late," said D'Arcy; "I must bid you good bye, then, I find."

"How! — you are going?"

"I am afraid I — I think I cannot go to the Breakfast," replied D'Arcy; for he thought of Violet.

"Very well," said Mrs. Harcourt, with the coldest manner she could assume.

D'Arcy was standing so that he had a view of her features, reflected in the large glass before which Emily was then untying her bonnet; and he saw at once her angry countenance, flushed with sudden displeasure. He stepped towards her, and could not forbear saying.

"If there is one to be there to-day who will own that my presence is cared for, I will go."

"You are the best judge of that — no one does, that I am aware of," answered Mrs. Harcourt, with pride, and rather passionately; for she felt deeply offended.

D'Arcy possessed a bad heart, I fear: it was not love, nor even vanity, which prompted him instantly to determine on going to

the Breakfast. If he liked Emily, he felt that he should like, better still, to crush the woman's pride which so naturally induced her to show some resentment at his apparently capricious disregard of her society. Nothing had subdued in D'Arcy that arrogant despatch of the feelings of all others, whenever he could extract something from them on which to feed the sneering disposition ever latent in his character; and Emily Norris, not Mrs. Harcourt, stood before him then, daring to show him that she could be cold and haughty.

He said nothing, but he went to the Breakfast; and I doubt if his promise to Violet, of returning to town at three, stood for five seconds as an obstacle to his going; for, by losing a little time, D'Arcy might have ridden home, and thence have gone late to — Park from London.

This Breakfast was certainly one of the prettiest fêtes of the season; and the spot in which it was given, in itself extremely beautiful. The day, soft and enjoyable, extended its influence to the minds of the guests — no crowd, no vulgar press or hurry annoyed them — nothing, in short, to destroy that illusion of luxury and refinement which is essential to please those whom satiety has rendered fastidious.

D'Arcy was becoming a rising star among the host of modern politicians, and was consequently courted and flattered by all the women. I own myself to have been unable to avoid feeling a little contempt for my fair friends, whom I have often seen lavish in their attentions to some politician of celebrity, but whose politics they perhaps hate — whose public conduct they abuse, and whose private character they will blacken with all the petty spite arising from idleness, prejudice, party spirit, or total ignorance. Yet, in society, these very women will develop their frivolous vanity, by attempting to attract the notice of, and to have the air of flirting with, the great man of the day; and this how often, notwithstanding all the faults they charge him with, and all the superabundant errors they can discourse upon with so much patriotic zeal, and of which he may or may not have been guilty! How often is not this very man the dupe of the seeming kindness and the winning smiles of fair ladies, in chip hats, looking very lovely with their fine skins, their *sauçon* of rouge, and their

white teeth displayed in speaking the honied words of flattery, which so completely succeed in making the object of them suppose that he is appreciated, aye, worshipped by these artless Delilahs of fashion!

D'Arcy to do him justice, was not easily flattered in this way; his nature rather prompted him to place too small a value upon the notice or the esteem of any one.

Mrs. Fitzmorris was one of the guests, and saw D'Arcy bestow on Mrs. Harcourt the attention which she had so perseveringly endeavoured to regain; and, beholding the admiration he displayed for another woman, she could not conceal from herself that she could no longer win one look of regard from him, or elicit any feeling beyond his merited contempt. This idea acted as a kind of vulture gnawing her heart, and there can be none that gnaws so deeply as the knowledge that we are *deservedly* despised by a person whose favourable opinion we covet.

Mrs. Fitzmorris looked on at this breakfast, and flirted with other men. She talked prettily, too, to the women, but in her heart became a prey to envy and discontent. She had already done all she could to detach D'Arcy from Mrs. Harcourt; and more she would have done had she known how.

D'Arcy had certainly taken care to lose no time in restoring himself to the good graces of Emily, and he made a merit of having, for the sake of her society, renounced the most precious engagement, which required him to have been in town. Emily was flattered, and believed him. She more than liked D'Arcy, and the coquetry in which had originated her first advances towards him, had partly faded away, or been exchanged for another sentiment.

Still there was more vanity than love on her part. She was led on by finding that she had the power of making D'Arcy prefer her society,—he who had once comparatively despised it. She admired his talents, for Mrs. Harcourt was not deficient in quickness. She was rather what is termed a clever woman, and she turned with pleasure from the *ennuyé* and discontented language of her husband, to the brilliant and energetic conversation of D'Arcy. Then, when the world began to sound the theme of his praise, it was not lost upon her; and, like the multitude, she

aimed still more at retaining D'Arcy, at least as a friend and an admirer.

Mrs. Harcourt was not bold and reckless, like Mrs. Fitzmorris, —such as she had shown herself to be, there are, indeed, but few. What Emily wanted in principle was partly supplied by the worldliness and the sense of outward decorum which her mother had so steadily inculcated, as the basis of all the good things of this world, and ( as Mrs. Norris, I fancy, thought ) of the next one too.

D'Arcy had penetrated Emily's vivid fear of losing the good opinion of society, and on this day he wished to give her no uneasiness by making his attentions too glaring. He, therefore, took care to disappear at those moments when the eyes of her most dreaded friends were upon her. Emily felt proportionately grateful, and D'Arcy succeeded in inspiring her with that confidence which was likely to be so acceptable to her feelings, and which he justly deemed would be exceedingly useful to himself.

Late in the evening, when the trees were enveloped in shade, and the shrubberies were beginning to be smiled upon by the moon —a time when I have observed their umbrageousness to be more eagerly sought than when the rays of the meridian sun have rendered them, to my mind, so much more desirable and refreshing — at this twilight hour, Mrs. Fitzmorris had the discomfort of seeing D'Arcy offer his arm to Mrs. Harcourt, and induce her to walk with him.

Mrs. Fitzmorris was sitting on the lawn, listening with a smiling face to the compliments, timidly bestowed, of an unfledged Honourable lieutenant of the Guards, lisping with nervousness at his own temerity, and deeply smitten with the pretty features and the smooth and neatly-painted cheeks of Mrs. Fitzmorris, shaded as they were by the large *pleureuse* that hung over her hat. She let this boy talk to her, and, half appearing to listen to him, or pretending to be attracted by an air of some German opera played by one of the bands of music on the lawn, the demi-obscurity aided her desire to notice unobserved every movement of D'Arcy and Mrs. Harcourt, who were now being watched by the lynx eyes of a dangerous and mean-hearted jealousy. Mrs. Fitzmorris thought that the objects on which her eyes were bent, and the angry sen-

sations of resentful disappointment which devoured her heart, were known only to herself. A person, however, stood near, who saw the one and guessed at the other. She had attracted the attention of an old acquaintance, who could fathom the secrets of her bosom, and in whose mind she became the means of reviving scenes and impressions of days gone by.

It was Lord Stanmore, whose glance, while standing as an idle looker on, had fallen upon Mrs. Fitzmorris, sitting at some little distance, and quite unconscious that she was watched by any one. So, however, it happened; and when he observed the direction of her eyes, he perceived they were watching the movements of D'Arcy busily occupied with Mrs. Harcourt. He remarked that she looked at these two till Emily had accepted the arm of D'Arcy, and disappeared with him by a distant angle of the garden.

"Does she still care for D'Arcy?" thought Lord Stanmore. "No, surely she is too heartless,—but yet she did once. He has long completely neglected her; but women are strange creatures, very strange." And Lord Stanmore pursued the opening train of thought till it led him to recal with sadness the time when he was the devoted admirer of the beautiful opera-dancer—the Violet Woodville—for whom he would have sacrificed so much, and who still retained possession, if not of his heart, of his memory, where she remained enshrined as *having* been the fairest and the most loveable of all her sex whom he had ever seen.

Lord Stanmore had never forgiven D'Arcy for his seduction of her, and though they had since met, nothing more than a mere recognition had passed between them. He retained no desire again to meet with Violet Woodville; in his eyes her charm had fled; and he pictured her to himself as grown bold and depraved,—all, in short, that was disagreeable and most disenchanting. But suppositions like these bring no consolation with them; they tend, on the contrary, to create disgust, and to destroy the pleasantest of our illusions — the reliance we place on the faith of outward appearances.

Lord Stanmore had not married, yet he had often been sufficiently struck with the attractions of some beautiful girl in his own sphere, to have flirted with her, and to have felt very sorry that at the end of the season their intercourse should cease; or, if



she married, he would feel an anomalous mixture of pity and envy towards her husband—envy, that he should have her for his wife, and pity for the poor man who ventured upon so irrevocable a step. He placed no faith in the education, the parentage, or on the behaviour of the girl he could not help admiring; he had been once cruelly deceived—Violet was living as D'Arcy's mistress! Whom could he trust?—was, not the question he put to himself, but the idea he had imbibed.

The course of Lord Stanmore's present meditations was interrupted. The garden was being gradually illuminated by lamps placed amongst the shrubs. The distant crowd dispersed; the music was called to aid the scene of mirth within doors, and the gay measure of the favourite waltz of the season had given courage to Mrs. Fitzmorris's youthful admirer, to propose to that lady to enter the house.

He had been long thinking whether he might ask her to waltz, but his nerves were hitherto unequal to such a proposal; at length, stimulated by the music, and blushing ruby red, he attempted, by a few broken words, to express his wish,—nearly overcome, however, by tremendous apprehensions of waltzing ill—notwithstanding the chairs he had been whisking round his room for the three months previous.

Mrs. Fitzmorris accepted the offer of being conducted to the dancing-room, and, proud of his charge, this incipient coxcomb availed himself of her condescension, not quite foreseeing, then, the ineffable degree of puppyism at which he was some day to arrive, or imagining that the time would come when he should be looking another way, to avoid the bore of talking or even bowing, for old acquaintance sake, to his present flame; and little dreaming of that future, when he should think her old, ugly, or gone-by, and might find it expedient to leave her to call her own servants, or to enlist other swains if she could.

I know of no existence like that passed in the world, for teaching us its general selfishness, or from which one may learn to moralize with such good foundation upon its paltry attributes.

Lord Stanmore, who was in a decidedly melancholy mood, preferred wandering in the garden, to the amusements going on in the house. It was a beautiful night; the moon was chased by

dark clouds, not hidden by them, but they hung in sable drapery round the planet, and made her look more beautiful. As he pursued his way towards a grove, which towered at no small distance from him, the sounds of revelry grew fainter and fainter.

The gardens were on a splendid scale. At one side, a range of green and hot houses stretched themselves, filled with every known exotic that skill had learned to rear. A wide expanse, in another direction, had been laid out as a Dutch garden; beyond, a feature occurred which is only seen, in perfection, in England, —a green and level lawn. In another direction, a broad gravel walk terminated in an aviary.

Lord Stanmore bent his steps away from these attractions, and penetrated a grove of cypress on his right. He walked along the paths in almost complete darkness, but neither was the obscurity so great as to have deterred others from being in his neighbourhood, for he heard voices which he thought he knew, and was more than once tempted to laugh to himself at overhearing these innocent children of the wood.

It was foreign, however, to Lord Stanmore's nature to play the spy on any one, and he neither wished to interrupt flirtations, nor to be the occasion of sleepless nights to a soul. Finding, therefore, that the grove was not so unpeopled as he had excepted, he thought of turning back.

The bent of his reflections had been changed, and something of the ridiculous had usurped the place of softer ideas.

He found he was approaching an angle, and, by turning up it, he fancied it would conduct him to the house by a shorter path.

At this moment he heard the sound of footsteps, evidently on the other side of the trees by which he was walking.

"But if the world should ever," —were words distinctly whispered in a woman's voice, but, though whispered, they were spoken emphatically, and from the speaker's heart.

Lord Stanmore imagined he heard this appeal tenderly responded to, though somewhat inaudibly, and then the first speaker spoke again.

"Leave me now,—I am tortured with alarm. Hark!"

"I must get away," thought Lord Stanmore; "I cannot bear to be a means of terror to these people;" and he listened, in order

to be certain of avoiding them if he walked onwards in the direction that he intended.

The footsteps ceased, and Lord Stanmore determined on proceeding, and on giving the unknown pair the opportunity of avoiding him, by waiting till he had passed, or of crossing through the bushes so as to be in his rear.

He reached the angle of the grove, turned it, and pursued his way.

At the very moment Lord Stanmore emerged into the gardens, in sight of the house, two people appeared at the same moment crossing his path. It was evident that they could be no others than those he had overheard, and who had retraced their steps by a different direction, which terminated by an opening hither up.

The two persons were Mrs. Harcourt and D'Arcy.

Lord Stanmore appeared so unexpectedly close to them, at the mouth of the wood, that it was impossible to avoid recognition; and the moon shone right above them.

For an instant both parties looked, what both felt,—that their meeting was an unexpected annoyance.

D'Arcy and Stanmore bowed, but the lady hastily lowered her veil.

The two parties then passed on in opposite directions.

"D'Arcy," exclaimed Mrs. Harcourt, seizing the arm of her companion most forcibly, "I shall die of terror!"

"What folly! What can Stanmore—besides, he does not write in the 'Age,' that I am aware of."

"But there is no saying what he may think,—and the world—the world!"

"Ah, the world!" repeated D'Arcy slowly, and the word jarred disagreeably on his ear. "I cannot bear a woman who cares for nothing but the world," he observed to himself; "and her remorse, her tears, for what were they?—the world! How the sight of Stanmore has reminded me of that poor girl! I will go home instantly."

"What are you thinking of? You seem to have no feeling for me!" exclaimed Mrs. Harcourt, in a tone of irritation.

"Really I am sorry you should think so; but would it not be

best that you should enter the house by yourself, or at least not with me? there are still some stragglers before the door."

"Well,—if I do not faint."

"Not here, for God's sake!" cried D'Arcy, quickly; "you had better let me conduct you to the house at once."

Mrs. Harcourt, however, adopted the plan of quitting D'Arcy's arm, and, returning without him; she made the best of her way to the ball-room, trusting that her prolonged absence from it had passed unnoticed.

She remained near the door, watching for the moment when she supposed D'Arcy would venture again into her vicinity; for the time had come in which Mrs. Harcourt depended upon D'Arcy as much as upon the world. She had given herself another ruler, and, under his dominion, she was waiting for his presence, —and at this moment D'Arcy was on his road to London!

By degrees Mrs. Harcourt could not avoid perceiving that she attracted unusual attention from people in front of her, and that a row of young ladies and their partners in a quadrille facing her, said something to each other, and then, looking at her, laughed..

Although Mrs. Harcourt saw the direction in which this small fire was aimed, she trusted she was mistaken in fancying herself the individual object of it; and she looked to see if she was in the neighbourhood of any oddly dressed man or woman: but no; at her left were some exemplary-looking ladies of a certain age, and, on her right, two or three foreign ambassadors, the Prime Minister, and the Lord Chancellor, were solemnly engaged in conversation, discussing, probably, the relative beauty of their respective countrywomen.

Mrs. Harcourt waited with impatience till the dancing should be over, magnifying the misfortune of her evil star, which so unaccountably made her an object of observation on this particular evening.

She would have retreated altogether, but for the fear that this, too, might be construed into a sort of pleading guilty—of what?

Ah! the old saying (as it has now become) that "conscience doth make cowards of us all," is ever a true one. Mrs. Harcourt saw disgrace, perhaps divorce, and then annihilation, before her;

and she stood in that room, while her hands grew cold and damp with nervousness and concealed agitation : for, in similar situations, how often the effect anticipated is disproportioned to the cause, or our reason misleads us as to the cause, and only our excessive trepidation enables us to foresee a result without the pale of probability.

Aided by the music of Collinet, the dancing went on, neither quicker nor slower than usual, and the mirth of the happy reached its full tide; the conversation of the politicians was not suspended, and not one soul in that apartment of revelry and magnificence gave a thought to a being amongst them suffering one of the most irritating of mental punishments,—the fear of having suddenly become despicable—or ridiculous. There was no saying whither, in the space of twenty minutes, the imagination of Mrs. Harcourt had travelled.

At the end of that time, the quadrille had ceased, and, as the dancers dispersed, an opening was formed in the crowd, and at the end of the brilliantly illuminated room Mrs. Harcourt saw Mrs. Fitzmorris. That lady also instantly beheld the object of her hatred, and at the same time began to stare, and to laugh, and to make remarks to her neighbours. Mrs. Harcourt would have died if she could, but felt fascinated, as if by the eyes of so many basilisks; and she could not move.

Within a second, Mrs. Fitzmorris was crossing the empty space of the apartment between them, and leaning on the arm of one of our most celebrated dandies, particularly famed for his biting sarcasms. What mercy was Mrs. Harcourt to expect from two such people?—and to her they advanced; Mrs. Fitzmorris attracting attention by herself alone, and now assuming her boldest manner, and talking loud enough to be heard by the whole room. “Nay, indeed I must, I really must tell her; poor Mrs. Harcourt—it is too absurd;” and so saying, this amiable couple approached their victim.

“Is it possible you don’t know?” began Mrs. Fitzmorris, affecting to be so overcome with laughter as to be unable to finish her sentence.

“Know what?” asked Mrs. Harcourt, growing very pale.

“That we all know you must have been walking in the cypress

grove this evening :” and again the laughter of the lady seemed to prevent her utterance.

A blush of crimson suffused the face of Emily. Had D’Arcy been there, she would have gone up to his side and said to him, “Protect me from these people;” but D’Arcy was not there.

“I do not understand you, Mrs. Fitzmorris.”

“You have got a branch of cypress in your bonnet—it has got amongst the flowers in your hat, and it is standing up in the most ridiculous manner,” answered Mrs. Fitzmorris, in a loud voice.

Mrs. Harcourt was overcome; and, at the moment when she only required presence of mind to make a careless reply, she fainted.

A combination of minute accidents of ill luck had attended her. There was nothing more simple than that a twig of a tree should have fastened itself in her bonnet; or that this should be first noticed by those opposite, or at a distance before her. In another moment, some one else would have taken upon herself the office of telling Mrs. Harcourt that her hat had been thus deranged; and, by doing it in a very different manner, all her nervousness would have been calmed, instead of being trebled in the way it was.

“Mrs. Harcourt is ill—has fainted!” uttered a hundred voices at once. The master of the feast had his attention called, and, with prompt kindness, he soon ordered every assistance should be rendered to Mrs. Harcourt, and she was conveyed to a private room immediately.

“How extraordinary! What is the matter? Where had she been?—In love with George D’Arcy!” were the questions and exclamations which circulated.

“Who is it, Hugo, that is in love with George D’Arcy?” asked an Oxonian, who happened to be a novice in London scandal.

“I will tell you,” said Mrs. Fitzmorris’s partner, of whom I have before made such honourable mention. “I will tell you,” said he, eagerly: “Mrs. Harcourt, that pretty woman, you know, with the black eyes.”

“Take care,” exclaimed a young man, passing, and giving a sharp stroke on the shoulder of the last speaker.

“What the d—l is that for, Toppington?” demanded the youth, turning round with surprise.

“Don’t you see?”

“ See what ? ”

“ What I have not time to tell you ; ” and, without further explanation, Lord Toppington disappeared, leaving the young men in some alarm, as to what they had said amiss. They did not notice that their conversation had been overheard by an indolent and supercilious-looking man, with a countenance redolent of disgust and ennui—and who was no other than Harcourt himself. He had arrived at the commencement of the fête, and had gone away directly after the dinner, telling his wife, whom he met by chance, that he felt bored, and was going home. He was by no means going home ; he had an appointment, which was not fulfilled by the person who made it ; and, in very bad humour, and suspecting that he had been played upon, Harcourt returned to C——Park, as the only method that remained to him of passing the evening.

He re-appeared accordingly, and then heard of Emily’s illness.

“ Were not you here when Mrs. Harcourt fainted ? ” asked a variety of his intimate acquaintance, who had never discovered his absence. As a matter of form, Harcourt went to inquire after his wife ; and only replied to those who inquired afterwards how she was, that she had quite recovered, and gone home.

It did truly happen that Harcourt overheard every word of the conversation between the two young men, whose town education had not been sufficiently completed to render them as circumspect as they ought to have been.

Harcourt was what is understood by the term, “ cold-blooded.” At this moment he could have killed his wife ; but, from temper, not from feeling, he swore an oath to himself, and turned away to drink champagne at the supper-table.

He did not in the least believe that D’Arcy assumed to be a lover of his wife—his own penetration, he imagined, taught him better. But in this excuse he would condescend to see none for her ; and he laid it to her conduct alone, that she became the object of such remarks, while he determined to make her feel the full weight of his displeasure, without deeming it necessary that D’Arcy should come in for any share of it.

“ I am certain,” said Harcourt to himself, as he swallowed his last goblet of champagne ; “ I am certain D’Arcy does not care one d—— for her ; but she shall pay for this.”

## CHAPTER XXIII.

"Pale, broken flower, what art can now recover thee?  
Torn from the stem that fed thy rosy breath,—  
In vain the sun-beams seek  
To warm thy faded cheek!  
The dews of heaven, that once like balm fell over thee,  
Now are but tears, to weep thy early death!"

MOORE.

IN the interim, D'Arcy had driven to town. He lost no time in doing so the moment he was free; for he remembered *then* that he had broken his promise, in not returning home at three that afternoon. More than one event, during the day, had called to his mind circumstances, which *then* he had no longer any incentive to forget; so now, as D'Arcy hastened back to Violet Woodville, returning love and good resolves were in his heart, and words of comfort were hovering on his lips. For *then* D'Arcy was disenchanted,—his pursuit was ended,—and *then* he repeated to himself, "I hate a worldly-minded woman."

D'Arcy reached his own door: the servant who admitted him gave him a letter.

"When did this come?" demanded D'Arcy, who knew the seal and superscription.

"An hour ago," said the servant; "I was to give it you as soon as you got home, sir."



The letter came from a well-known political character, and one of those whose talents and influence constitute them leaders when the opportunity presents itself.

D'Arcy had heard rumours of a change of administration, but he disbelieved it. He at once knew, however, that this letter would communicate something eventful; and, seizing a light, he went to Violet's sitting-room.

It did not surprise D'Arcy to see her asleep upon the sofa, he knew her habit of sitting up for him; but the room was in confusion,—letters were on the ground; he observed that the windows were open, and guessed that the night-air had blown in, and disarranged the papers.

D'Arcy first stooped to kiss the forehead of his mistress, but her features were buried in the cushion, and his lips but rested on the long curls that fell over them.

D'Arcy, anxious to read his letter, took no farther pains to awaken Violet, and, arranging the lamp, for the sake of a better light, he hastily tore open the envelope.

It was indeed a communication informing D'Arcy of an immediate change of administration, and concluding by pressing him, in the most flattering manner, to form one of the few, whose advice would be attended to by his party on the present juncture.

It must be owned, at that moment, that D'Arcy dreamt a most pleasant dream of successful ambition; schemes of patriotism, and honours, that might follow; a theatre (and means, to boot), whereon to display his talents,—a field, at length, to build his fame upon, and deeds! great deeds, that he should do!

"Violet, Violet, dear!" exclaimed he, at length, called from his reverie by the clock striking one!

"Wake, dearest! see, it is time, Violet! I am come home." And D'Arcy shook her gently by the arm which lay uppermost.

Finding he did not rouse her, and growing impatient, D'Arcy raised her, intending to make her sit upright.

The burthen felt heavy, when by his efforts Violet was lifted from her recumbent position: her head hung on one side, whilst her eyes were half open!

For a full moment D'Arcy gazed upon the form he held!—for

a full moment he continued to support the body as he had raised it. Then D'Arcy let it fall, and staggered backwards!

The next instant the servants were aroused by a scream,—not a woman's, but a man's!—the shriek of a man horror-stricken!

The domestics rushed into the apartment. D'Arcy was kneeling with one knee on the ground,—his face hidden in his hands, but those hands shook convulsively.

Before him lay the body of Violet Woodville, and the eyes were gradually relaxing in their tension, and imperceptibly opening wider and wider. Her face was very pale, save two small red spots on either cheek, where fever had been burning.

“Oh, Mr. d'Arcy! Sir!—what is to be done?” exclaimed Howell, the first, in some degree, to recover presence of mind.

D'Arcy rose, and, before another word could be said, he was traversing the streets in search of medical aid.

But D'Arcy had lost all mental power, and he became sensible of a confusion of thoughts which rendered him unable to guide himself rightly, and, though he knew full well the residence of such men as Halford or Brodie, he could direct his steps to neither.

Luckily Howell had followed his master, and he begged him to return home. “Sir,” said he, “I have sent three servants for physicians, and I will go for one myself; but do consider, Sir, if she should recover, your being with her at the time may make all the difference.”

D'Arcy suffered himself to be advised, and he returned home.

What “a change had come o'er the spirit of his dream!” Where now were D'Arcy's visions of ambition?

What then to him was his name, though it were to live a thousand years? What then cared he for England's might, or the proud panoply of renown, that hangs, from beyond the gloom of future ages, o'er him whose wisdom shall have been a means unto England's matchless glory?

What were then to D'Arcy the witchery of expected power, the applauses of a people, and a universal fame?

All had vanished beneath the mantle that Death had spread before his eyes,—shadowing forth the nothingness of man, and the power of God,—recalling, indiscriminately, youth and beauty, and

all we love, to those unknown realms which all the talent of man has never yet explored!

Marietta, the Italian maid, weeping, and in semi-hysterics, was, at the same time, employed in endeavouring to restore animation to her mistress.

On the sofa she had found a bottle of laudanum, and, clasping her hands, and screaming, she showed it to D'Arcy. It belonged to a medicine chest, and was labelled *poison*!

D'Arcy well remembered presenting that medicine chest to Violet when they went abroad. It was a small and beautifully-ornamented box, and the bottles were handsomely mounted.

They had been filled at the chemist's with the ordinary routine of medicines, and laudanum, of course, included amongst them. The bottle that contained it was empty. It had been drained to the dregs!

D'Arcy could no longer doubt that a heavy sleep had fallen upon Violet,—the immediate effect of the laudanum, and the way in which it becomes fatal, if its action be allowed to remain undisturbed.

D'Arcy knew this, and dared not hope. From time to time Marietta wrung her hands, and exclaimed, in Italian,—

“Se vostra Signoria fosse tornato a casa alle tre ore, questa sventura non sarebbe mai accaduta!”

The arrival of a surgeon sooner than D'Arcy had dared to expect, afforded some relief.

“How long since do you suppose the poison to have been taken?” was the question first demanded by Mr. —.

Marietta, the only person who could give information, said it must have been since three o'clock. She stated that her mistress had appeared ill, and very much agitated in her manner since the time D'Arcy had been absent, and that she fancied she must have heard a great deal of bad news, and was evidently labouring under distress; but that she considered her better when she was sent for in the afternoon by her mistress, who, pointing to the clock, told her at that hour she expected Mr. d'Arcy to return.

Since then, Marietta declared, she had been twice into the sitting-room, at seven and at eleven o'clock; and, seeing Violet lying on the sofa, on both occasions, she concluded she had fallen asleep; and her only anxiety was to avoid disturbing her.

While he listened to these details, the surgeon made use of all the remedies he thought available. D'Arcy attempted to examine some letters which were scattered about; and, among them, he discovered that of Violet's mother, and one also, which lay open and unsealed, but which he noticed, because it was in Violet's handwriting: he was, however, too agitated to read it, even though he attempted to do so; but he determined not to lose sight of a paper so precious, and he carefully charged himself with it.

"Is there hope?" he asked, at length.

The surgeon turned his eyes upon the speaker, ere he replied, and riveted them for a moment upon the man who stood beside him—upon D'Arcy.

No one could have exhibited a stronger instance of the power of the mind upon the countenance. Not a feature could have been altered; yet such a change had gone forth upon his face, that I doubt if D'Arcy, as he now stood, would have been recognisable by any of his friends.

"There is no hope!" was the slow reply of the surgeon, while he mentally said to himself, with the intuitive knowledge of a man versed in humanity, "I do but tell him that of which he is already certain. This man must have deeply loved! How much more deeply has he sinned!"

What a scene that room presented! On the one hand, the well-furnished apartment, cheerful in itself, and possessed of so many articles of luxury and comfort—the very chintz covering of the sofas, such objects as even these, stood out in horrible disunion with the tragedy of that hour!

On the couch lay all that remained of Violet Woodville. The traces of beauty were there still, but the hectic spots of fever were dying fast away. Her hair was partly in disorder, and partly retaining, still, some of the arrangement it had received that very day from the hands of Marietta. The hair, however, seemed chiefly to be grouped around the throat and shoulders, as if it had bestowed itself with care, to shade the chiselled features of the dead. The surgeon had closed the eyes; and the long lashes fell in beautiful lines over the marble skin—only the mouth bore the semblance of sorrow in its expression.

On the ground, at Violet's feet, sat her Neapolitan maid, weep-

ing heavily; at a little distance stood D'Arcy and the surgeon.

"Sir," said the latter, after a short pause, "you had better retire;" and he endeavoured gently to lead D'Arcy from the room.

\* \* \* \* \*

The next day formed a feast for the lovers of news and scandal.

"I suppose," said one, "you have heard what has happened to poor D'Arcy? That girl, who was his mistress, has poisoned him, and then stabbed herself."

"Good heavens! but I understand he will recover, and that it was not certain that she stabbed herself, but only took prussic acid in his presence!"

"It is a horrid affair," said a third. "I hear the girl killed herself in a fit of passion because D'Arcy was jealous of her and threatened to leave her. There will be an inquest, of course. You have heard, I suppose, that Lord —— is to be the new Premier?"

"Pray who is to have the War-Office?" demanded a worthy House-of-Commons bore of an acidulated ex-officio.

"That madman, George d'Arcy; they can find no one else, and they mean to wait till they can take off his strait waistcoat!"

"Bless me, what times we live in! All I can say is, that if they venture upon such a thing, I shall think it my duty to get up in the House and to say that they must be aware," etc. etc. etc.

"Harcourt has had a blow-up with his wife—I am in hopes there will be a divorce!" exclaimed a loungee at Crockford's.

"I doubt that; she would have the best of it, and could get the divorce first, if she tried for it."

"Oh, I know for a fact," rejoined another, "that there has been a violent quarrel, and that Harcourt threw a brush or a pomatum-pot at her, but that they can't separate, because he is so 'hard up'—he finds he cannot make her an allowance: and I hear also that Mrs. Fitzmorris has been in hysterics all day, and has sent for everybody to tell them she shall always have to reproach herself with the death of D'Arcy's mistress, who took poison out of jealousy because D'Arcy made love to her!"

An inquest was held upon the body of Violet Woodville. Several of D'Arcy's friends, when once informed of what had

occurred, interested themselves to render it as private as possible.

D'Arcy's attendance was dispensed with. Marietta testified to his uniform kindness to the deceased. She also spoke to the alteration which had appeared in the bearing of her mistress previously to her death.

The next principal witness was Larray, who stated the painful information he was the means of conveying to the deceased. A few more circumstances were detailed, tending to show that her mind was not in its usual state on the day that she swallowed the poison. A verdict of temporary insanity was returned, which was considered perfectly satisfactory.

The letter without an address and in Violet's handwriting, which D'Arcy had found on the night of her death, was not produced. He spoke of it to no one, but, as it was seen afterwards, it may be as well to say here that the very incoherent style of that letter tended to prove more particularly that hallucination of intellect was approaching at the time when Violet Woodville wrote it, — probably a few hours before her death.

D'Arcy's friends were now at the helm; and before the town had quite ceased talking and wondering over late events, it was understood that he had requested to be sent upon a distant mission to North America, and that his desire had been at once complied with.

Two years elapsed and Lord Glendore died, bequeathing his whole property (to the surprise of some people) to his distant relation, George d'Arcy.

Business connected with his new fortune obliged D'Arcy to return to England, and there he remained. A path was open to him in which he must have found excitement if not enjoyment, and D'Arcy rose to be what is termed a great man, in an incredibly short period of time.

As years passed, his manners grew colder. He was on terms of private friendship with no one, while at balls and parties he was seldom seen.

Mrs. Fitzmorris found that he had forgotten either her existence, or that he had ever been acquainted with her. In consequence of this total disregard, she wrote to him requesting an explanation.

She received no other answer than an enclosure containing a certain anonymous letter found amongst the papers of Violet Woodville. D'Arcy had detected this composition to be the performance of Mrs. Fitzmorris.

With the Harcourts D'Arcy, on his return to England, appeared to have lost much of his intimacy.

Harcourt devoted himself to the turf, and, notwithstanding a separation had been reported, he appeared to get on much better with his wife than formerly. He lived but little at home, however, and was continually falling into pecuniary embarrassments.

Mrs. Harcourt, if that could be possible, became every season more and more guarded in her conduct; and she had the satisfaction of establishing a reputation for most notoriously unblemished virtue.

The women grew rather afraid of her, and the young men treated her with immense respect. She had not the same popularity, because some people declared she was inclined to be uncharitable towards her neighbours, and others that she was a disagreeable prude; her beauty also was greatly diminished by a general air of formality and discontent, which pervaded every feature.

D'Arcy never renewed his *friendship* with her; and upon the whole, when people gave themselves the trouble to think about it, they settled that she and D'Arcy entertained a mutual dislike to each other.

A particular acquaintance once remarked this to her.

"It is true," replied Mrs. Harcourt, "I do not like Mr. d'Arcy. I have known him well, and I acknowledge his great talents; but he is only one of many proofs, that a dissipated man is always unworthy of being the friend of a truly estimable woman."

Circumstances are not well remembered in great towns like London, and time is our most amiable auxiliary whenever there is something we desire that the world should forget.

Ten years rolled away.

D'Arcy was never supposed to be near matrimony, nor did he ever occasion a sigh of disappointment in the breast of the most marrying mamma existing. Not one of them entertained a hope that D'Arcy would live to surrender.

D'Arcy had employed some of his leisure hours in collecting books, which formed a valuable addition to the library at M—— park, bequeathed to him by Lord Glendore.

One day, during an autumn recess, and when D'Arcy was at M——, he employed himself in arranging his library; and his cousin Lord Toppington, who was with him on a visit, gave him his assistance.

"What is this?" exclaimed the latter, while engaged in turning over the leaves of an ancient-looking book.

"What?" repeated D'Arcy, looking over his cousin's shoulder.

He saw nothing but some withered flowers, between the leaves of the volume. Withered as they were, there was no mistaking them.

They were the flowers of the geranium. Years had passed away, since D'Arcy had gathered up those flowers from the ground where the hand of Violet Woodville had scattered them.

It was on the day of Harcourt's marriage. D'Arcy, on that occasion, had put them carefully away in this very book.

"Elle était de ce monde où les plus belles choses  
 .Ont le pire destin;  
 Et Rose elle a vécu, ce que vivent les roses,  
 L'espace d'un matin,"

said Lord Toppington, reading out some lines that caught his eye; and he carelessly rejoined, "That is a quotation I have often seen. This is an old French book, 'Poésies de Malherbe.'"

"Yes," answered D'Arcy: "it is a rare edition: give it me."

One day, when D'Arcy was left without anything to wish for, enjoying a career of success such as fell to the lot of few—one day, when his name had acquired a European fame, and when the sun of prosperity was at its zenith—when nothing seemed wanting to his private happiness, or his public glory, — D'Arcy shot himself!

It was impossible to account for his committing suicide; and, after a most minute investigation of witnesses, the jury were forced to return a verdict of *felo de se*!

A will was found, by which D'Arcy expressed a wish that his



property should be entailed on Lord Toppington, his nearest relation. "But this I leave to the mercy of the Crown," was the concluding observation of the will; showing that, at the time of making it, D'Arcy must have contemplated the act by which his property became forfeited.

In the *escritoire*, which D'Arcy was in the daily habit of using, a letter was found, remarkable for its contents, and which, from its incoherency, left no doubt by whom it had been written, on the minds of those at all acquainted with the story I have undertaken to narrate.

Neither date, signature, nor address appeared to this paper, which was worn, as if it had been often read, and ran as follows:—

"DEAREST GEORGE, — I have torn up a letter I wrote, intending to give it you; but I have done right,—it was to tell you, you have ceased to love me. If it is so, it is my own fault. Never blame yourself about me,—for you have been all goodness. I am not clear, and I do not feel well. But *he* is dead, D'Arcy, and I have killed him. When I see you to-morrow I will tell you all about it. I am not certain why I am writing this, but if my father sends for me, I shall go to him,—I cannot wait even to see you.

"Dearest, you have been very kind to me, — I have never ceased to love you. Away from you, I should not have wished to live. So, dear George, you could not help yourself, and I would be with you, and you have always been good to me. If either of us have been to blame, it is I, — never believe otherwise than that.

"Oh! my head aches. It seems strange, but I cannot read what I am writing: but I mean to say all that is kindest to you, and that you are to be happy, D'Arcy,—always happy,—dearest, happy,—you will be happy,—hap—"

THE END.







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